

COMPASS – COMPARATIVE LITERATURE IN AFRICA

Essays in Honour of Willfried F. Feuser

Edited by

Chidi T. Maduka & Denis Ekpo



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COMPARATIVE LITERATURE IN AFRICA

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Essays in Honour of Willfried F. Feuser

Edited by

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Dedication

To

Bi Feuser Benson

*the loving daughter who fought hard to immortalise the name
of her dear father.*

Acknowledgements

It is not possible here to acknowledge all the contributions made by various people/bodies to the publication of this book whose long gestation made some people nurture the legitimate fear that it would never see the light of day. We cannot, however, fail to mention certain names whose spectacular contributions call for recognition.

The first is the Faculty of Humanities, University of Port Harcourt, which took the firm resolution to express its gratitude to late Professor Willfried F. Feuser for his numerous services to the Faculty in particular and the University in general by publishing a book in his honour. We are very grateful to the Faculty for choosing us to edit the book.

The second is the University of Port Harcourt which enthusiastically welcomed the idea and provided the initial financial grant that enabled the enterprise to take off very smoothly. The University merits commendation for this display of generosity in the face of the daunting financial problems it was grappling with.

The third focuses sharply on Ms Bi Feuser Benson, Professor Willfried F. Feuser's loving daughter (to whom the book is dedicated), whose timely financial intervention salvaged a virtual desperate situation by making it possible for the manuscript to eventually go to press. We are ever grateful to her for the immeasurable kindness.

It is difficult to forget the assessors whose rigour helped in determining the quality of the papers and making the exercise of

the selection less forbidding. We thank them very much for their commitment to scholarship.

We are very grateful to Mr George Syder who largely handled the typesetting of the manuscript and Mr Chukwuma T. Maduka who did some part of it. Their diligence is appreciated. We thank Mrs Emily Uzoukwu, the Secretary of the Comparative Literature Programme, who effectively handled the problems of correspondence.

As for Professor Ozo-mekuri Ndimele, the Editor of *Kiabara*, who did the formatting, his devotion to duty and determination to see the manuscript published stand out for commendation.

Chidi T. Maduka
Denis Ekpo

Editorial Note

On 28 February, 2000, the academic community, and indeed members of staff of the Faculty of Humanities, University of Port Harcourt, Nigeria were shocked by the news of the death of Professor Willfried F. Feuser, a literary icon and a comparatist of no mean repute. Though German by origin, Professor Feuser showed great concern to the Africanist agenda of self-realization, and therefore devoted the greatest part of his productive academic life to the cultural revival and socio-economic emancipation of Africa and the Diaspora through his scholarly publications.

Professor Feuser was one of the founding fathers of the Faculty of Humanities. He was for many years the Head of Department of Foreign Languages & Literatures and the Dean of Faculty of Humanities, University of Port Harcourt, for two tenures. He was not just a literary veteran, but also had an excellent command of the major world digital languages, English, French, German and Portuguese. This made Professor Feuser a most 'wanted' lecturer in his Department.

In recognition of his absolute commitment to the development of the Faculty of Humanities, particularly in attracting international attention and recognition to the young University while Professor Feuser lived and worked with us, the Senate of the University of Port Harcourt decided to honour him in a special way. It was decided that something more than just an obituary would be appropriate as a memorial to his lifelong contribution to the growth of academics in Africa and the Diaspora. Consequently, the Editorial Board of *Kiabara*:

Journal of Humanities was mandated to produce a special edition in memory of Professor W.F. Feuser.

The Faculty of Humanities Board of Studies met to implement the decision of Senate concerning the special issue of *Kiabara* to honour Professor Feuser. It was also decided that two other fallen heroes of the Faculty, Professors Ola Rotimi and Nwanna Nzewunwa, be honoured in the same manner. Consequently, Guest Editors were appointed for the different volumes. Dr. John T. Agberia, who was then the Acting Head of Creative Arts, was appointed Guest Editor to the Rotimi volume. Professor. Abi Derefaka, who was then the Acting Head of History & Diplomatic Studies, was appointed Guest Editor to the Nzewunna volume, while a seasoned literary comparatist, Professor Chidi T. Maduka, and Dr. Denis Ekpo, who was then the Acting Head of Foreign Languages & Literatures, were appointed co-Guest Editors to the Feuser volume.

In 2002, the special issue on Ola Rotimi was published. It contained 26 short papers which provided a variety of perspectives, both personal and academic, on the life, career, and the works of Professor Ola Rotimi. In the same edition in honour of Professor Rotimi, we announced that the volume in honour of Professor Feuser would be in print before long, and that it would be a richer assemblage of papers from national and international celebrities. We are glad we have fulfilled our promise. We are indeed grateful to the Maduka-led team.

Before you is a bumper harvest of stimulating ideas on a wide range of issues in literary criticism. This volume contains 20 well-researched papers, a rich introduction, and a long list of publications by Professor Feuser himself dating up to 1988.

Some of the contributors were Professor Feuser's former students, friends, and professional colleagues.

Anybody who is familiar with Professor Chidi T. Maduka's penchant for academic excellence would appreciate the amount of structural re-engineering that went into the editing and selection of papers for this volume.

It is indeed a great honour to be associated with the making of this monumental piece. It is an immense contribution.

Professor Ozo-mekuri Ndimele (Kiabara Editor)

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0. Introduction: WILLFRIED F. FEUSER (1928 – 2000)

Chidi T. Maduka

Willfried F. Feuser was a German who made Nigeria his home. After his fruitful academic career at the universities of Ibadan, Ife, and finally Port Harcourt where he helped establish a flourishing Comparative Literature Programme, he bowed out of the stage of life on 28 February 2000 and was buried in his chosen home, Nigeria, thus demonstrating that all the peoples of the world share a common humanity. There is the European in the African and the African in the European.

As a literary comparatist of an outstanding intellectual versatility, W. F. Feuser used his great erudition to establish points of convergence between Africa and Europe, and Africa and its extensions in the New World. He easily accomplished this feat because of his command of German, French, English and Portuguese languages. His particular interest in *Imagology*, the study of the representation of peoples in literary texts, pushed him into laying bare the scurrilous portrayal of Africa in European literatures, thereby discrediting the racist ideas held by many Europeans about Africans. He fully endorsed the position of J.G. Herder, a German writer with progressive ideas on race:

If humanity is the ethical destination of man, to be arrived at through love, compassion, peaceableness, truth, justice and religion, in brief, all the virtues of

social living, it appears that the enslaved African possesses these virtues to a much higher degree than those who reduced him to bondage, although they deprived him of his natural nobility. (Feuser, "Slave to Proletarian: Images of the Black in German Literature", *From Negritude to Nobel* 158).

One cannot emerge from the world of his critical imagination without accepting the validity of the following remark by Mrs. Rauter on the enduring significance of the art works from the NOK, Benin, Ife, Igbo, Owo, Ikom and Esie cultures of Nigeria exhibited in Yugoslavia in 1985: "Surprisingly, after seeing those sophisticated sculptures, they (European visitors) went home convinced that African art had a lot of influence on the European art" (*The Guardian*, August 17 1985 p. 11). It is indisputable that the destiny of all the peoples of the world is one and indivisible.

Feuser's scintillating, analytical mind and encyclopaedic grasp of knowledge gracefully reveal to the reader the constants running through such diverse currents/ movements as Negritude, Afro-Cubanism, Haitian Indigenism, Harlem Renaissance and the Black Aesthetics in America; the works written by the authors of African ancestry and those inspired in Europe by such movements as Romanticism and Realism; and even the works written in Nigerian languages and those in African Anglophone/ Francophone texts.

One cannot easily forget his contributions to knowledge in the area of translation. He has systematically made available to the English-speaking world texts originally written in

German, French and Portuguese. This aspect of his scholarship makes him a gem of cosmopolitanism.

Worthy of mention is his style. His vocabulary is intimidating, diction elegant and expressive power exceptional. His prose flows majestically in cascades of images. He is indeed a critic with a phenomenal perspicacity of mind and fertility of imagination.

Although Professor Feuser has left for home after his pilgrimage on earth, his accomplishments have immortalized his name. In 1987, his country of birth, Germany, recognized his worth by awarding him the Officer's Cross of the Order of Merit of the Federal Republic of Germany "in recognition of his untiring work of the promotion of the German language in Nigeria".

1. Africa and Comparative Literature in the Era of Globalization

Chidi T. Maduka

The idea of the world being a global village is a noble one because it dramatizes the point that the various peoples of the world share common political, economic and cultural ideals as members of one family. In practice, however, this is a sheer mirage because Africa's experience as a unit of the village has been very sordid. The title "Africa Cries" which the editor of the religious journal *Messenger of Saint Anthony*, Friar Mario, uses in a recent editorial of the journal captures the spirit of what many commentators on Africa have been bemoaning. Specifically, he laments that:

... very few people truly understand the depth of suffering, chaos and total lack of vision and sense of direction that identify Africa.

No other continent on the face of this planet contains such a dramatic mixture of suffering and poverty. (i).

He then graphically catalogues "... some of the evils afflicting that martyred continent" (1). In essence, Africa suffers in the midst of plenty; the abundance of natural and human resources in the continent shrivel into insignificance in the face of the magnitude of human-generated woes that stifle creativity out of the people.

It would be preposterous to associate Mario with the practice of some self-indulgent western journalists who luridly feed the imagination of their readers with fantasies cooked up by them to destroy the humanity of the African. On the contrary, he is forthright and sincere - in fact, the article is written in the spirit of liberation theology. The unsavoury picture rather challenges African intellectuals working in various spheres of knowledge to closely examine the implications of globalization for Africa.

The phenomenon provides food for thought for students of Comparative Literature. Abiola Irele's observation in his recent book *The African Imagination: Literature in Africa and the Black Diaspora* offers a profitable starting point for reflection. The book basically examines the strategies used by selected authors of African ancestry to give expression to the anguish of their problematic encounter with the potent Western world. Taking cognizance of the overbearing presence of the tenets of post-structuralism and postcolonial aesthetics in contemporary Euro-African literary scholarship, he undertakes to situate himself historically by appealing to his audience to read his ideas in the context of a practitioner of the traditional approach to sociology of literature living in exile. He does this not only to follow the practice of what is frequently done in post-colonial discourse but also to ensure that his ideas do not elicit wrong responses from scholars enthralled by the discoveries of post-structuralism and post-colonial studies in contemporary Euro-African literary scholarship, even though these approaches to criticism largely fail to account for many phenomena in contemporary African literature and culture. Similarly, it is pertinent to state that the

ideas expressed in this essay are from a scholar still domiciled in Africa, the point of convergence of competing forces of cultural hybridization virtually at the point of sweeping the continent off the path of its cultural identity. In addition, it is important to bear in mind the compelling significance of the concept of *homo nationalis* developed in anthropology by Etienne Balibar which Paul V. Kroskity in “Regimenting Languages: Language Ideological Perspectives” clarifies as follows:

*For scholars, the recognition of belonging perforce to the species **homo nationalis** alerts us to watch for the influence of nationalist projects on our research, to take into account that, whether or not we admit it, we ourselves are profoundly influenced by our national identities. (30).*

The author is a product of history whose ideas are informed by the turbulent times in which Africa is embroiled; accordingly, literary issues are discussed within the larger context of politics and economics. It is therefore not illogical to expect that certain issues in literature, culture and criticism which seem outmoded are here pertinently resurrected and stressed while others considered topical are de-emphasized.

From this perspective, one notices at once that Africa is still enmeshed in its perennial struggle to break off its chains and move from the periphery of the world cultural arena to the centre where the various peoples of the world gather to celebrate their humanity. The struggle is in its critical stage because of the currency of the glamorous word “globali-

zation” which, as earlier mentioned, calls for mutual respect among the various peoples of the world. But Africa is more and more asphyxiated by the Western powers which are in control of the machinery of power of the global village. The International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, The Paris Club - all established after the Second World War in Europe - are run with rules of operation oblivious of African interests. They work in unison with the omnipotent Western media to stifle life out of Africa and keep her perpetually on the fringes of the world political, economic and cultural life. The occasional pronouncements made by Western political leaders to initiate reforms in the system in order to create a world of genuine interdependence between the North and the South seem merely platitudinous. And the feeble attempts made by African political leaders to redress the situation seem to compound the problems rather than solve them. Accordingly, globalization has virtually made Africa a cultural satellite of Europe, a consolidation of the process that started with the 1884/85 Berlin conference. Susantha Goonatilake’s observations are pertinent:

The European expansion of the last five hundred years with its different economic thrusts corresponding roughly to mercantilist, industrial and present neo-colonial ones, resulted in the throwing of a near complete cultural blanket almost all over the world. This cultural blanket has suppressed local culture, local arts, local systems of valid and relevant science and has resulted in a virtual cultural “genetic” wipeout. Diversity and originality, arts and ideas which are not of European origin are vanishing and culture is getting

packaged, served in a plastic form, as the hegemonic machine of European culture moves on. (v).

Tony Bilton et al. confirm this:

The strength of the globalised media firms is clearly central to any arguments about cultural imperialism, since these firms can be seen to swamp localized media forms and messages, and so construct a set of values and meanings about what should be regarded as good, stylish, right or wrong, just as they have long done in the 'West'. (68).

The mentality of consumerism now pervades the consciousness of the African peoples, hence the phenomenon of their uncritically assimilating the ideologies and currents of ideas beamed on them from the West. This partly explains why, for instance, Nigeria has so far not taken a keen interest in developing a system of governance rooted in the philosophy of its socio-political institutions; it has rather chosen to first experiment with the British parliamentary system which it later jettisoned for the more costly and cumbersome American presidential system. The celebrated "African extended family system" which engenders an enviable welfare system is yet to be incorporated into the body of its system of governance. Similarly, many African intellectuals have enthusiastically embraced the fanciful ideas encoded in such new movements of cultural and literary criticism as post-structuralism, post-coloniality and New Historicism without closely examining their appropriateness for the study of African literature and culture.

Two formidable weapons of propaganda used by Europe in the past to sustain her hegemony over Africa are still potent. Although they have been widely discussed by scholars, they can bear repetition here because of their relevance to the current issue of globalization. Many Europeans and Africans still fall prey to them in spite of the gallant efforts made in the past by champions of human freedom and social justice to discredit them.

The first hinges on the myth of God's curse on the Black race, a belief deriving its authority from the biblical account of Noah's curse on Canaan, the son of Ham who is widely believed (on spurious grounds) to be the progenitor of the black peoples of the world. As a result of the curse, Blacks are said to be created with black skin, curly hair, thick lips and flat nose - elements of abnormality in the physiognomy of the human species. Alexander Crummel, a great African American thinker, has incisively discredited the claim in "The Negro Race not under a Curse". "In fact", as he concludes, "of all the sons of Ham, Canaan was the *only one who never entered Africa*. Of this there is abundant evidence, sacred and profane" (33). In spite of the convincing repudiations of the idea by many scholars, the belief crystallised in Europe that Blacks are sub-humans who are only fit to be slaves and servants, as has been fully documented by G.D. Killam (*Africa in English Fiction, 1874-1939*), E.C. Nwezeh (*Africa in French and German Fiction, 1911-1933*), and W.F. Feuser ("Slave to Proletarian: Images of the Black in German Literature"). In the words of W.F. Feuser who has done many other studies in this area of research:

For many centuries the black man was either 'the least of his brethren' or worse still relegated to the darkness of humanity to gnash his teeth among the brutes [...]. He was associated with notions of inferiority, moral depravity and diabolism. The symbolic equation Black = Evil survived from the Baroque Age. (158).

More devastating is the second weapon of propaganda which has elevated the myth of the curse to the level of an incontrovertible scientific truth by white racists. Accordingly, Blacks are perceived as biologically inferior to the Whites, an assertion that was used to sustain Apartheid in South Africa. In the words of Comas who discusses the idea in Racial Myths:

Hankins claims that the bulk of the brain is less in the Negro and deducts that the Negro is mentally inferior. H. L. Gordon (1933) asserts that congenital cerebral deficiency is a characteristic of the Negroes of Kenya, resulting, in his view too, from the lesser cranial volume and the difference in the conformation of the Negro brain. (24).

The thesis has been seriously challenged by such scientists as Leaky, Steggard, J. Huxly, A. Keith and Sergi. For instance, it has been demonstrated that:

1. *The weight of the frontal lobe, regarded as the seat of the intellect, is 44 percent of the total weight of the brain in men and women, **black and white alike.***

2. *No racial differences were observable as regards the weight of the brain; there are, however, marked variations between individuals within each human group or 'race'.*
3. *Men of marked intellectual powers have not necessarily possessed brains greater in weight or volume.* (Comas 24).

These discredited ideas about the black race provide the intellectual background for understanding the character of the residual, racist ideas lurking in the dark corners of Western civilization which fuel the emergence of anti-African policies in the contemporary globalized world. Recent widely-publicised, discourteous treatment meted out to some Black celebrities in some immigration offices of some Western countries can be attributed to it.

It is against this virtual cultural decimation of a race that African writers have taken up arms. They have forcefully asserted that African presence has to be recognized in the world. The “veil” in which she is enveloped, to use one of the favourite images of W.E.B. Dubois, has to be ripped open. Or, in terms of the metaphor recurrent in their works which Ralph Ellison has fully dramatized in the *Invisible Man*, her invisibility has to be shattered. Virginia Brindis de Salas, an Afro-Uruguayan female poet, articulates it fully in the poem “La hora de la tierra en que tu duermes” (“Asleep on Earth at a Propitious Time”)

*Time has blinded those
who live on the other side.*

*Amigo, remove the blindfold
that keeps you from seeing us,
remove the blindfold.*

.....

*Remove the blindfold, remove it;
remove the blindfold from your eyes.*
(Jackson trans. xii – xiii).

In a tone of quasi-supplication, the persona implores the white race to rid itself of the prejudices that prevent it from acknowledging the presence of Africa in world culture. A similar preoccupation informs the vision of the works characteristic of the movements of Negritude, Afro-Cubanism, Haitian Indigenism, Harlem Renaissance, the Black Aesthetics and even the recent *bolekaja* criticism of Chinweizu, Jemie and Madubuike.

The fight is a forbidding one as can be seen from the concept of world literature developed by prominent European scholars. Goethe used the term *Weltliteratur* in 1827 to denote the study of literature as a discipline encompassing all the literatures of the various peoples of the world, a very fabulous enterprise indeed. However, Africa was not in the register of the continents with such literatures since, one would imagine, it was considered a dark continent whose history started with the coming of the white man to the continent, as another illustrious German thinker, Hegel, affirmed.

A celebrated definition of the term restricts itself to the study of Great Books or Masterpieces from the West, especially old

classical Europe, Great Britain, France, Germany, Spain and Italy. Such authors as Homer, Ovid, Shakespeare, Flaubert, Goethe, Cervantes and Dante come readily to mind. It would be difficult to admit such outstanding writers of African ancestry as Soyinka, Achebe, Senghor, Walcott, and Morrison into the fold.

Even the definition given to it by Alexander Solzhenitsyn, the outspoken 1970 Nobel Laureate who courageously defended the dignity of man in the former Soviet Union is restricted to the countries making up the West and the East of the old world order. As he affirms, "World Literature is no longer an abstraction or a generalized concept invented by literary critics, but a common body and common spirit, a living heartfelt unity reflecting the growing spiritual unity of mankind" (30). Like Goethe, he tends to see it as an extension of Comparative Literature, a perspective that many critics disagree with.

Jost, for example, believes that world literature offers a stepping stone to the practice of Comparative Literature as a discipline. To him, "world literature provides the scholar with raw materials and information, which he groups according to critical and historical principles" (qtd by Clements 26). He goes ahead, however, to formulate the view that Comparative Literature is synonymous with Goethe's *Weltliteratur*, a formulation that baffles Clements (26). The controversy need not detain us here as making feather-edge distinctions between the terms is not the immediate concern of African scholars whose main interest centres around the problem of

establishing the discipline in Africa in this era of globalization.

Comparative Literature is a branch of literary scholarship which examines affinities existing between texts written in different languages and those between literary texts and the related art forms of music, dance, painting, sculpture, etc., and even other subject areas like philosophy, political science, sociology, physics, etc. The aim is to break down the barriers of parochialism artificially created by the existence of different often competing language departments, creative arts units and various spheres of learning so as to promote knowledge as a united, integrated and indivisible phenomenon that can be maximally used for solving human problems. It demands the habit of omnivorous reading from its practitioners who have to show a mastery of many languages, especially those that form the cornerstone of their scholarship, as well as a willingness to pursue knowledge from the perspective of interdisciplinarity.

Traditionally, the French and the American schools dominate the fields of research in the discipline. The definition of the discipline given by C.L. Pichois and A.M. Rousseau is still considered classical:

La littérature comparée est l'art méthodique par la recherche de liens d'analogie, de parenté et d'influence, de rapproche de la littérature des autres domaines de l'expression ou de la connaissance, ou bien les faits et les texts littéraires entre eux, distants ou non dans le temps ou dans l'espace, pourvu qu'ils appartiennent à

plusieurs langues ou plusieurs cultures, fissent-ils partie d'une même tradition, afin de mieux les décrier, les comprendre et les goûter. (174).

(Comparative literature is a methodology of research which emphasizes search for linkages of analogy, relationship and influence; establishes convergences between literature and other areas of expression, knowledge or even facts and literary texts whether they are historically connected or not in time and space, provided they belong to several languages or cultures, and the same tradition, in order to describe, understand and enjoy them better".)

The texts are chosen from literatures or cultures that are distinct from one another and the scope of the discipline is restricted to comparison of texts from European civilization. The aim is invariably to underscore the kinship between the various peoples of the continent. Etiemble has tried to extend the frontier beyond the West but others such as Van Tieghem, Carré, Guyard, Mourra and Souiller generally toe the traditional line.

American, British and German scholars anchor their perspectives on issues related to European civilization. Wellek, Lovejoy, Auerbach, Weisstein, Clements and Clifford, to mention but a few - all give the same orientation to their works by dealing, in the words of Anne Paolucci, with "... the European core of English, Spanish, German, French and Italian, which is the subject matter of the discipline we call 'comparative literature'" (17).

Paolucci has used her organization in America, Council on National Literatures, to champion the cause of extending the discipline to the literatures of non-European peoples and even to incorporate into it the literatures written in non-European languages. Her point of view is unpopular with scholars who believe that it is cumbersome and even undesirable to accord recognition to literatures written in non-European languages, especially those from Africa. Roberts J. Clements, a distinguished American comparatist, for example, forcefully asserts that:

Africa, which would seem at first to present the major language problem, presents fortuitously little difficulty, for the literary vehicles will remain French and English. Portuguese will surely decline, especially as the chief theme of its poetry, liberation, has been achieved. (31).

It is difficult to understand why he does not consider it possible for the Lusophone literature in Africa to extend its life beyond the point of its concern with politics. The other point dealing with the literatures in African languages touches on the long-standing prejudices against these literatures in European literary scholarship. Molly Mahood perpetuates the prejudice in Nigeria when, in 1954, he asserts at the University of Ibadan (then a College of the University of London) that:

... it is vital for the future writer to enter the English literary tradition where he may learn his trade from master-craftsmen - learn, above all, the use of words as precision-tools, perfected and kept in good order by

generations of English writers (...). (qtd. by Feuser "The Case for Comparative Literature" 39).

W.F. Feuser has impressively expanded this parochial vision in his erudite scholarship on comparative literature. In "The Case for Comparative Literature" and "The Emergence of Comparative Literature in Nigeria" he essentially argues that Africa occupies an enviable place in world literature in terms of the richness of the literatures written by authors of African ancestry in European and African languages. He builds this idea into his vision of the development of comparative literature as a discipline in Nigeria. An intricate network of interrelationships permeates the traditions of these literatures and even extends to other literatures of the world. He accordingly gives a pride of place to literatures written in African languages contrary to the position taken by Mahood. Various aspects of these literatures can constitute valid objects of study in comparative literature. The result will be salutary for the inter-ethnic relationships in various multi-ethnic African countries. In terms of Nigeria, for example, "... the Nigerian Commonwealth of cultures could be brought to a higher, more conscious stage of intercommunication and interaction" (Feuser "The Emergence ..." 6). This position challenges, in the words of Feuser, "... the very idea of a national literature in Africa being based on an imported language" ("The Emergence ..." 6).

It is important to underscore the cultural ravages done to Africa because of the imposition of English, French and Portuguese on the peoples of Africa through colonialism and globalization. European languages are virtually omnipotent in

the cultural life of Africa because of their influence in information technology brought about by globalization. Consequently, African languages, except perhaps Kiswahili, are at the verge of extinction because they are not given prominence in national development in African countries. In virtually every African country a European language operates as the official language of the nation.

In Nigeria, for instance, English is the official language and French has just been elevated to the status of the second official language because, as has been argued by the Nigerian government, it is very important in the ECOWAS region. Accordingly, Nigeria has been falsely proclaimed a bilingual country just as is the case with Cameroon. This is a fallacy in sociolinguistics because Nigeria is polyglossic and not bilingual. Thinking otherwise perpetuates the inferior status imposed on the Black race by the colonialists, a status that continues to rear its head in this era of globalization.

It is therefore imperative for Nigeria at the three tiers of government to take urgent steps to salvage the honour of the country in world cultural heritage by creating space for the Nigerian languages and literatures to operate as tools of national development. "The clouds are thickening: it is urgent to salvage the destiny of the nation" (Maduka 18)

The situation has serious implications for Comparative Literature as a discipline in Nigeria. Just as is done in other parts of the world, the discipline should serve as a tool for promoting national integration in the country. Accordingly, the notion of national literature in Nigeria (and other parts of

Africa) should be re-examined. The argument advanced by Chinua Achebe and propagated with glee by many writers and critics should at this point of the country's historical development be subjected to a close scrutiny. According to him, the national literature of various African countries is that written in the imported colonial language because its audience is national, whereas the literatures in African languages are ethnic in scope. He, however, adds a point that has been largely ignored by scholars: the situation could be reversed through political intervention at any stage of a country's historical evolution. The historical moment has come in Nigeria but owing to the strangulating pressures foisted on the country by the current forces of globalization there seem to be no prospects of its reversal, especially as the Nigerian political leaders seem unaware of the cultural implications of using English and French as the tools of national development. However hydra-headed the solution of the problem may appear, it is difficult to reject the idea that a demonstration of political will on the part of the wielders of political power will eventually lead to its solution, as revealed in many parts of the world that have been plagued by a similar problem.

National literature in Nigeria ought to be perceived comparatively by viewing it as the aggregate of themes and forms cutting across the literatures in Nigerian languages. This definition allows for the study of Nigerian literatures – oral and written – in schools across the country. As Maduka asserts,

... geo-culturally speaking, there are several national literatures represented by the numerous linguistic communities in the country; accordingly, one has , for instance, Edo national literature, Efik national literature, Hausa national literature, Igbo national literature, Yoruba national literature. Themes, symbols, or stylistic features (whether in their oral or written forms) constitute studies in comparative literature. ("Comparative Literature ..." 122).

This position has been challenged by such scholars as E.C. Nwezeh ("Littérature africaine...") and Seun Ige. Nevertheless, Anglo-Nigerian literature being "a variety of world literature in English like Canadian, West Indian, Anglo-Indian, Australian, New Zealandan and American literatures, is a satellite of English literature which constitutes the super-power of the literature in English in the firmament of world literature" (Maduka "Across Frontiers..." 24). This position vindicates the arguments made in the past by Obi Wali and currently defended by Ngugi wa Thiong'o.

Africans have to wake up to the challenges of globalization and reject the present practice of linguistic imperialism which privileges the use of European languages in the continent. As sociologists tell us with regard to English:

In historical terms, the ubiquity of English is relatively recent: it has much to do, first, with the impact of British colonialism – on whose land 'the sun never set' – but second, and more important, since 1945 on the massive influence of the United States: the country

which possesses the largest commercial market in the world has been the singly most important reason for the spread of (American) English ... (Tony Bilton et al. 68).

It is of interest to note that even the French have recently taken steps in France to protect the integrity of the French language by passing laws forbidding the use of certain English words in the French radio; if not, the overbearing presence of the English language will do some damage to the French language and eventually to the French culture. In short, most peoples of the world have at one time or the other taken steps to fight for the survival of their mother tongue. The English, the Finns, the French Canadians, the Vietnamese, the Cambodians, etc. – all have done that. Only people who are perceived as having been cursed by God can fail to take such a measure.

African universities face serious challenges in setting up their Comparative Literature programmes in this era of globalization. Of significance is the scarcity of resources - material and human - which accounts for the relative infancy of the discipline in the continent. In Nigeria, for instance, the University of Ibadan once organized a national conference on it and put in circulation the journal entitled *Journal of African and Comparative Literature* (1981) which did not go beyond the first issue. The University of Port Harcourt is the only institution in Nigeria successfully running the programme but only at postgraduate level. W.F. Feuser played a leading role in setting it up. As he tells us in his thoughtful article “The Case for Comparative Literature” written before the coming into being of the programme:

A full-scale programme in Comparative Literature involving English, French, German, Portuguese, Spanish, Kiswahili and Nigerian literatures in a non-departmentalized environment - thus avoiding the creation of many small, parochial units - is at present being prepared at the University of Port Harcourt. (48).

The scope of the discipline is Africa and its extensions in the New World. Currently, its language policy insists that students should have a knowledge of French, English and an African language. This is done to ensure that specialists trained in the programme are able to claim competence in at least a literature in an African language. Unfortunately, however, it does not admit students who have a knowledge of more than one African language but fail to show competence in French. This is because it lacks the competence to teach literatures in African languages, a shortcoming that perpetuates the European linguistic imperialism imposed on African through colonialism and globalization. It is projected that this shortcoming will be corrected in the future when at least the literatures in Nigerian languages will be objects of study in the programme.

We now come to the issue of theories of literature related to the movements of Post-structuralism, Post-coloniality and the New Historicism. It is my considered opinion that Comparative Literature in Africa cannot profitably use these new critical approaches however fascinating they may appear.

Post-structuralism: This approach to criticism privileges the idea of instability of meaning in discourses. Derrida's deconstruction uses *aporia* to celebrate the processes of *signifiers* undercutting truth embedded in *signifieds*, thereby creating a view of the world that borders on nihilism. A critic like Roland Barthes so dramatizes the idea of plurality of meaning in texts that he advances the view that what matters in the act of reading is the reader's perception of a text's interrelationship with the *texts anterior* and *posterior* to it and not the presence of the author who is in fact non-existent. The author is in fact dead. Even Bakhtin's attempt to fuse post-structuralism with Marxism through the concept of *dialogism* does not succeed in rehabilitating the status of the author even though in his theory the author is not entirely dead but somewhat caged. A theory based on relativism cannot effectively serve as the organizing principle of comparatism. Such a view cannot logically serve as the basis for analyzing texts with a view to promoting the spirit of progress and national integration in African countries where truth is perceived as stable and authors perceived as fully responsible for the creative acts ascribed to them. It is illuminating to quote the following observation by Meera Nanda, an Indian scholar working on the philosophy of science:

The gift I want to return is the cluster of theories that forbids outsiders from evaluating the truth or falsity of any beliefs of other people in other cultures from the vantage point of what is scientifically known about the world and, conversely, allows the insiders to reject as ethnocentric and imperialistic any truth claim that does

not use locally accepted metaphysical categories and rules of justification. (286).

To Nanda, the postulations of post-structuralism and postcoloniality are like (to use the title of the book in which the article is published) “a house built on sand”.

Denis Ekpo’s article on “The Aporia of Post-colonial Anger: Dissidence and Difference in Africa’s Contemporary Literary Discourse” is informative. In it he deftly applies the post-structuralist theory to the interpretation of selected works by Amadou Kourouma, Ayi Kwei Armah, Chinua Achebe, Sony Labou Tansi, Wole Soyinka, Sembene Ousmane and Bernard Nanga in order to “deconstruct” the authors’ “one-sided and misleading” perception of “post-colonial society and culture”. He basically lays bare before us what he sees as the authors’ wrong perception of reality: they confuse “Empire State” with “nation”, hence the impossibility of their representing a phenomenon that is comprehensible. Building on the notion of indeterminacy of meaning developed by the devotees of the movement, he forcefully asserts that:

It seems that most post-colonial writers have been largely bewitched by the seductive but misleading master-narrative, that is nationalism and its derivatives such as ‘national consciousness’, ‘national identity’, and so on. (11).

It is rather Ekpo himself who is so “bewitched by the seductive but misleading” formulations of post-structuralism that he fails to see the social significance of the visions of life

portrayed by the writers who rightly decry the failure of political leadership in contemporary Africa.

It is significant to affirm that post-structuralism has been of help to feminists in undercutting the meta-narrative of patriarchy but in doing so it further *undercuts* what it has *undercut*, thereby leading to a world of logomachia or even aporia. It is heartening to see female writers/critics of African ancestry making serious efforts to liberate themselves from the nebulous world of the globalized concept of feminism, hence the emergence of a catalogue of related terms - “womanism”, “African feminism”, “positive feminism”, and “motherism”. However, they often fall prey to the attractions of the concept, thus failing to make proper discriminations in the use of the term before applying them to their critical practice.

Post-coloniality: This critical theory derives its premises from post-structuralism and extends the frontiers of the former branch of literary scholarship known as “Commonwealth Literature”. It “deconstructs” the world of the colonial master by asserting the identity of the “sub-altern” (to use Gayatri Spivak’s famous term) who lives on the periphery of the world dominated by the colonialist. By so doing, the European critic attempts to divest himself/herself of colonialist arrogance by creating space for the “sub-altern” to assert his/her identity as a person in a multicultural world perceived as ideal for both the “colonialist” and the “colonized”. Unfortunately, this often leads to neo-colonialism by undercutting the possibility of

anti-colonialist dissent and, what is worse, edifying the use of English at the expense of local languages.

French scholars have now developed the French equivalent of postcoloniality, an attempt that consolidates the neo-colonialist gains of the movement of Francophony. According to Jean-Marc Moura, the author of *Littératures francophones et théorie postcoloniale*, the theory:

renvoie à une diversité géographique pluriculturelle organisée par rapport à un fait linguistique: à la fois l'ensemble des régions où le français est réputé jouer un rôle social incontestable et l'ensemble des régions (à part la France) où existent des locuteurs de langue première. (2).

(refers to a geographical, multicultural diversity organized around a linguistic fact: at once the totality of regions where French is reputed to play an incontestable social role and the totality of the regions (with the exception of France) where there are speakers with mother tongues).

Moura proudly affirms that the branch of literary scholarship blossoms in multicultural regions where French serves as the language of culture. He later acknowledges that it “pourrait demeurer une globalization européocentriste, incapable d’appréhender la diversité des pratiques d’écritures et des situations culturelles” (7) [“could remain a Eurocentric globalization incapable of understanding the diversity of modes of writing and cultures”].

Let us juxtapose them with quotations from the Anglophone axis of the neo-colonial apparatus:

With the explosion of the English language all over the world, carried by settlers, traders, missionaries and officials, the social world was so commonly enlarged that it, like the Commonwealth itself, had to form itself into its own version of contemporary literature in English. And with more space to work with, place became more important than period, and one common factor in the new national literatures. (Robertson 6).

The English language has thus become the language of culture for the colonized.

Another author, Ihab Hassan, who has written extensively on postcoloniality, forcefully asserts (in the vein of what Nanda and Moura have said) that “Imperialism or colonialism ... is of course, a constitutive principle of postcolonial criticism” (61), a point of view that echoes Robert Young’s position in the controversial book *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture and Race*.

All in all, postcolonial criticism constitutes a danger to Comparative literature because it virtually negates the existence of African languages by elevating the colonial language of the metropolis to the status of the language of culture, thereby eclipsing the study of African-language literatures which should be used comparatively to promote the cause of national integration in various African nations. Besides, it is Eurocentric and neocolonialist. It is better for

Africans to stick to the original concept of “postcolonial” which stresses the concept of periodisation in African literature by “designating the post-independence period” (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin (186))

The New Historicism: This approach to criticism originated from Renaissance studies in Britain. It is often made attractive by its association with cultural studies which owes its ideas to Foucault’s post-structuralist postulations on discourses and power. The power is not physical but intellectual: the wielder of discourses comes under the overwhelming influence of language by being more or less transformed into objects of dissent incapable of translating the dissent into action.

Comparative literature in Africa will be the worse for it if it adopts this methodology of critical practice in analyzing texts because the practitioner will find it difficult to extract from the texts visions of life pointing to meaningful quest for progress and social justice in society.

To conclude briefly, Comparative Literature in Africa in this era of globalization has to root itself in the cultures of the African peoples and embrace with caution the misguided attractions embodied in such current European critical methodologies as post-structuralism, post-coloniality and The New Humanism because they advance views that are often imperialistic. They deny the African the opportunity to affirm his/her identity fully. Specifically, they over-emphasize the literatures written by Africans in European languages, thereby celebrating the hegemony of European civilization

over Africa. The African has to reactivate the use of his/her mother tongue and the literature written in it as tools of national development.

Consequently, literatures in African languages are to be studied comparatively as aggregates of forms and values cutting across the ethnic literatures of each country. It is not progressive to regard literatures in European languages as the national literatures of the countries to which each of them holds sway. If this practice is perpetuated, the African will easily fall prey to the racist ideas lurking in the subconscious of some westerners, which view him/her as a subhuman unable to determine the nature of his/her destiny.

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2. History, Ideology, Text: Pierre Macherey and Marxist Literary Theory

Ibrahim Bello-Kano

Scientific truth is always paradox, if judged by everyday experience which catches only the delusive appearance of things - K. Marx, Value, Price, and Profit. Pt. VI.

Introduction

It is arguable that Marxist literary criticism is now profoundly unfashionable, at least in the academia. As Eagleton writes, one cannot take the word “Marxist” in the phrase “Marxist criticism” for granted (“Introduction Part I” 1). Yet it cannot be said that Marxist literary theory is valueless or lacks analytical power. The point is that despite the great prestige of Marxist theory especially in its heyday in the late 1980s, it is unlikely that a student coming to Marxist literary theory for the first time in the Nigerian universities in the 2000s would encounter the work of the French philosopher and literary theorist, Pierre Macherey (1938). Yet as Young argues, “Marxist literary criticism has not produced a new theory in over twenty years. Not since Macherey’s *A Theory of Literary Production* of 1966 has there been any fundamental theoretical innovation” (21). This has arguably remained the case since Young wrote. For Young, it is not that there have not been works of Marxist criticism, but that there have not been, since Macherey’s work, a decisive development in

Marxist criticism. This assessment of Macherey is consistent with Belsey's in her influential book, *Critical Practice* and Milne's introduction to a Reader on Marxist literary theory, which he co-edited with Eagleton. Indeed it is instructive that Eagleton, perhaps the most popular Marxist literary theorist writing today, produced his most sustained piece of criticism during his "Machereyan" phase. For example, *Criticism and Ideology*, which Eagleton wrote under the influence of Macherey, remains his most fundamental methodological contribution to literary scholarship. Despite his abandonment of many of the fundamental ideas of Macherey's early work, it is clear that Eagleton has not produced anything of comparable power and rigour since the publication of *Criticism and Ideology*.

The tasks of this paper, therefore, are first, to offer a brief explication of the ideas of a brilliant Marxist literary theorist, whom even Eagleton has called, in celebrated phrase, "one of the most challenging, genuinely innovatory of contemporary Marxist critics" (*Against the Grain* 10)¹; and second, to show that Macherey's work, pre-occupied as it has been with the relationship between history on the one hand and ideology and textuality on the other, is a far more adequate and interesting species of literary theory than it is widely assumed. This paper, then, proposes to present Macherey's ideas around his most important works, from the early *A Theory of Literary Production* through to the seminal essay, written with Etienne Balibar, "On Literature as an Ideological Form: Some Marxist Propositions", and *The Object of Literature*, his most recent work in literary theory. Finally, the paper reviews the criticism levelled against Macherey and

assess his contribution to literary theory in the light of these criticisms.

Intellectual Context

Macherey, once a member of the French Communist party, was a disciple of the famous French philosopher, Louis Althusser (1918-1990), and the first critic to employ Althusser's ideas in the late 1960s in an attempt to solve conceptual problems in Marxist literary theory, then under the heavy influence of a neo-Hegelian heritage. However, to appreciate the extent of Macherey's achievement, it is necessary to offer at least a thumbnail sketch of the problematic history of literary theory within Marxist thought.

It is well-known that Marx and Engels left behind only scattered comments on "literary criticism" (Demetz; Baxandall and Morawski; Praver). It was the subsequent Marxists, among them Franz Mehring, Georgi Plekhanov, and Lenin, who sought to produce systematic analyses of what might today be called "Marxist literary criticism". Lenin's intervention into literary theory was prompted by his urgent need to provide the Communist cadres with a broad outline of a politically committed critical reading of "bourgeois" texts, and culture as a whole. In this task, Lenin drew, following Marx's example, on Hegel's *Science of Logic* and *Philosophy of Fine Art*, some of Marx's comments on alienated labour in *Capital*, and on Engels' 1888 comments on Margaret Harkness' novel, *A City Girl*. This was the inspiration behind Lenin's famous articles on the Russian novelist, Leo Tolstoy, whose writings he saw as a

reflection of historical circumstances, and Tolstoy himself as a *mirror* of the Russian revolutions of 1905 and, by implication, of 1917 (see Lenin's articles on Tolstoy appended to Macherey, *A Theory of Literary Production* 299-323).

In these essays, Lenin began by interrogating Tolstoy's techniques of *presentation of reality*, seeking to discover in them the existence of "class equivalents" within the larger fictional universe of Tolstoy's texts. Lenin's methodology involved the deployment of the *reflection* theory of literature and the *realist* ontology. This was the theoretical basis for his claim that Tolstoy's texts reflected, more or less accurately, certain observable and unobservable features of material and social reality. What is more, Lenin's formulations were closely modelled on the neo-Hegelian thesis of *typicality*, first expounded within the Marxist context by Engels in his discussion of Mary Harkness' novel: "Realism", Engels suggested, "implies, besides truth of detail, the truthful reproduction of typical characters under typical circumstances" (Marx and Engels *On Literature and Art* 90). Taking a cue from Engels, Lenin proceeded to search out the extra-literary value-clusters such as "class", "typicality", "alienation", and "(untroubled) reflection" of reality in Tolstoy's fiction. Soon, this methodological model became the "standard" Marxist view of literature, and was refined by the early Marxist critics such as Mehring and Plekhanov (Baxandall; Morawski; Bisztray).

The early Marxist reflection theory of literature received its most sophisticated philosophical elaboration in the hands of

the great Marxist critic, Georgy Lukacs, who combined the neo-Hegelian notion of art as a humanizing and emancipating element, and that of the artist as a co-producer of the problematic of alienation, with the literary realist thesis of art as a mirror, to produce a heavily Hegelianized version of Marxist aesthetics (see Arvon 33). In *Studies in European Realism* and a host of other writings, Lukacs developed a Marxist theory of realism from a strong anti-modernist perspective. From this vantage point, Lukacs erected a Hegelian-Marxist criticism based on an ethical critique of the fragmentation and quantification of personal life under capitalism (reification), the warping of the human potential for self-realization as elaborated by the youthful Marx in his *The Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts* (1844). Lukacs looked forward to a period in which art would rise above the narrowly ideological, and consequently uphold the values of moral responsibility and the class struggle of the working class, the proletariat (Slaughter 134-35).

Thus, when the 1934 Congress of Soviet Writers officially adopted the doctrine of "socialist realism", Lukacs' perspective became the official Stalinist line. Stalin's minister of culture, Zhdanov, announced that it was the duty of the writer to "provide a truthful, historico-concrete portrayal of reality in its revolutionary development" and strive to confront "the problem of ideological transformation and the spirit of socialism". Thus "socialist realism" effectively demanded that writers toe the Stalinist party line, and imaginative or creative writings be "party-minded" (see Zhdanov 4-7). Distinguished Soviet writers such as Maxim Gorky, and

Soviet cultural organizations such as Proletkult, and the All Russian Association of Proletarian Writers (RAPP) endorsed this party line (see Tertz 5).

It was against this background that Althusser launched his anti-Hegelian re-interpretation of Marx. Althusser elaborated the notion of “problematic” by which he meant the theoretical framework or system which determined the significance of concepts, procedural deductions, and, above all, *omissions* within a body of thought. This led Althusser to look for *epistemological breaks* and *symptomatic* omissions, silences, and elisions of a thought or systems of thought. In *For Marx*, *Lenin and Philosophy*, and (with Balibar) *Reading ‘Capital’*, Althusser deployed, with breathtaking sophistication, this method of symptomatic reading against the Lukacsian notions of ideology, totality, humanism, self-overcoming, and the like. Its effect was to lead to a deconstructive critique of the deeply entrenched Hegelian and humanistic currents of Marxist thought, represented by Lukacs, Lucien Goldmann (Genetic Structuralism), and the Hegelian Marxists of the German Frankfurt School, notably Theodore Adorno and Herbert Marcuse.

Theoretical and scientific practices, Althusser contended, were distinct from such things as the ideological, political, and economic practices. Yet all these, he further argued, were practices, *types of production*. This led Althusser to see reality as irreducibly complex, and subject to multiple causation, that is, reality as *over-determined*. But this was, in the last analysis, a devastating critique of the Hegelian notion of Totality, which Althusser saw as an “expressive totality”, a

“totality all of whose parts are so many ‘total parts’, each expressing the others, and each expressing the social totality that contains them” (Althusser and Balibar 96). Althusser’s rejection of a single essence, a whole that possessed a core, and for which all the other elements (of the whole) were only *reflections*, led to a philosophical revolution in Marxist analyses of literary phenomena (see Roberts 34-38).

Not only did these ideas lead to the rejection of the classical Marxist base/superstructure paradigm, the traditional Marxist conception of ideology as a form of false consciousness, the deterministic notion of the class struggle as inevitable, but also the so-called holistic view of economic, political and cultural reality. Against these, Althusser offered a view of the whole as a “plurality of instances”, as *differential*, heterogeneous, divided, uneven, contradictory, and saturated by ideology, as manifested in their gaps, absences, silences, and omissions (Althusser and Balibar 207). With Althusser began the *break* with the Hegelian heritage of orthodox Marxism: henceforth, the Marxist critic need not seek to analyze a single, homogeneous and all-encompassing Totality (the literary, for example), timeless or self-evident works, but rather ensembles of practices, analyzable forms of *production*, rather than wholly fictional, author-centred “creations”. These deconstructive ideas acquired a very sharp cutting edge in that they coincided with the tumultuous events of 1966-68, generated by the popular opposition to the American invasion of Vietnam, the great student and radical movements in Western Europe, and the anti-Stalinist uprisings in Hungary and Czechoslovakia.

A Theory of Literary Production

It was in that context, and the intellectual re-thinking of the Marxist heritage, that Macherey's intervention into literary theory arose. However, as will be seen below, Macherey's work is not a simple reproduction of Althusserian premises within literary theory. In many cases, for example in the relationship between ideology and literary production, Macherey broke new grounds by creatively incorporating the methodological insights of Marx in *Capital*, and of the newly-emerging anti-empiricist philosophy of science pioneered by Gaston Bachelard and Imre Lakatos. It is to an explication of Macherey's ideas that we now turn.

In *A Theory of Literary Production*, Macherey suggests that it is the critic who, employing a new language, "brings out a *difference* within the work by demonstrating that it is *other than it is*" (7). For Macherey, the text is not, and cannot be, complete, because conjecturally, it "has its *margins*, an area of incompleteness from which we can observe its birth and its production" (90). By "production" Macherey means the text's self-productivity as a chain of significations, as opposed to what Eagleton calls the text's "material apparatus, technological infrastructures and social relations" (*Against the Grain* 10). For Macherey, "writing" or "textuality" analytically consists of production, and of work on, and with, historico-cognitive materials. Like the French literary philosopher and founder of Deconstruction, Jacques Derrida², Macherey rejects the notion of a central, univocal meaning. He sees the text as "participating" in some sort of intertextuality. He writes, for example, that the text "never

comes unaccompanied, but always determined by the existence of other works, which can belong to different areas of production" (100) He also argues (again like Derrida) in favour of *dissemination*:

Constrained by its essential diversity, [the text], in order to say one thing, has at the same time to say another thing which is not necessarily of the same nature; it unites in a single text several different lines which cannot be apportioned. (99).

In a breathtaking discussion of the relationship between explanation and interpretation, Macherey rejects the traditional critical notion of interpretation as a comprehensive reading of a text or as "the determination of *meaning*" (75). For him, the idea of the interpreter as "one who takes up position at a centre, or rather in an intermediate space [and who then] proceeds to an exchange" (75), is a piece of mystification, or is indeed a mere copying and repetition, which he regards as inherently uninteresting (76). In a famous aphorism, Macherey calls this notion a "purifying repetition... a single signification" (76). In its place Macherey proposes "explanatory criticism", which he sees as the more interesting form of criticism, being a search for the "knowledge of the text". This search for a knowledge of the text and the conception of criticism as explanation would be regarded by the Derrideans, for example, as a form of logocentrism³ because it does seem to imply that there is, or could be, a fixed centre outside discourse or the play of meaning. Yet it is also true that all evaluation of a text, to say, for example, that the text is this or that, or has this or that *effect*, is, without

doubt, a search (explicit or implicit) for a “knowledge” (however putative) about the text. This is conveyed by Macherey’s phrase that explanatory criticism “recognizes the necessity that determines the work but which does not culminate in a *meaning*” (77-78).

In this way, Macherey “decentres” the text, since he regards the task of criticism as measuring the “*distance* which separates the various meanings” of the text’s multiple meanings. Echoing the realist theory of science, Macherey argues that the text is not a stable source of meaning but the product of a host of incompatible and contradictory meanings:

[The text] bears in its material substance the imprint of a determinate absence which is the principle of its identity... not the extension of a meaning; it is generated from the incompatibility of several meanings... In seeing how the book is made we see also what it is made from; this defect which gives it a history and a relation to the historical. (80).

Macherey envisages a new form of discourse in which criticism and its object, the text, are held to be distinct, and in which the former seeks to produce a new *knowledge* of the latter. On this view, criticism neither abolishes itself nor merely seeks to interpret the text; neither does it function as a mere “instrument” or “passage” to the concealed truth, meaning or structure of the text. Rather, criticism acts upon the text in such a way that it *appears other than it really is*. For Macherey, then, a text is criticism’s *other*, its topic, and a

potential referent for its conclusions (5-6). This model of criticism avoids the following three endemic fallacies or failings of literary theory: the organicist fallacy which says the text is a harmonious totality; the epistemic fallacy, or the definition of the text (indexicality) in terms of (our) knowledge or theory of being; and the hyper-realist fallacy, the reduction of multi-causality and difference to a single essence (as for Lukacsian-Hegelian criticism). In the first two, the text is seen as the given; in the last, as a ghostly model of reality. For Macherey, on the contrary, the text is not the product of a single cause, whether authorial or narratorial (determination). Instead, it is composed from a "diversity of elements which give it substance" (49).

An important aspect of Macherey's theory lies in its conception of the relation between literature and ideology. His contribution is unique in that unlike Althusser, Lukacs and the other Marxist thinkers who conceive of ideology either as a "cement" which holds society together or as class consciousness, he argues that "a historical period does not spontaneously produce a single, monolithic ideology, but a series of ideologies determined by the total relation of forces; each ideology is shaped by the pressures upon the class which generate it" (115). This is suggestive and entails a negative conception of ideology. Equally suggestive is Macherey's contention that the writer is only "the apparent author of the ideology contained in his work; this ideology is in fact constituted independently of him. It is *encountered* in his work, just as he himself *encountered* it in life" (15). This insight underscores any text's intertextual connection with previous discursive and literary formations, what Julia

Kristeva (*Desire in Language* 45) and Jacques Derrida (*Of Grammatology* 107) call *intertextuality*, a process in which “one text reads another”. This is why *pace* Macherey, a text is not “*directly* rooted in historical reality, but only through a complex sequence of mediations” (113).

One of Macherey’s significant contributions to literary theory is his contention that reality in the text is an *absence*⁴ precisely because the text, as a discursive system, does not stand face to face with reality but with ideology and with history. This is because the text presupposes the absence of that about which it speaks; it is this lack, its silence, which the text is unable to say. He writes, for example, that the “speech of the book comes from a certain silence, a matter which it endows with a form, a ground on which it traces a figure” (85). This means that the knowledge of the text must include “a consideration of this absence” (85). But this absence or silence is a determinate one, which also shows up the text as incomplete and “hollow”. Yet for Macherey this incompleteness, being a determinate incompleteness, cannot be reversed. In the same manner the “silence of the book” cannot be remedied, or made up, for. Neither is it “a temporary silence” that could be abolished or removed. Fundamentally, it is this silence that constitutes the text as an object. The text, writes Macherey,

cannot speak of the more or less complex opposition which structures it; though it is its expression and embodiment. In its very particle, the [text] manifests, uncovers, what it cannot say. This silence gives it life. (84).

To illustrate: the critic will not find, for example, in Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, an explicit admission of its complicity with imperialist ideology. True, there are oblique signals to the imperial reading formations of its author. But this "silence" of the text is precisely what makes it possible in the sense that if it were simply seen as a propaganda text for British imperialism, it would not be valorized as explicitly as it has been within both liberal and radical critical circles⁵. In the logic of the preceding argument by Macherey, it may be argued that *Heart of Darkness* has an unconscious (the British Empire) which consists in its "splitting", a splitting which is a division, and this division is *its* unconscious, "the unconscious which is history, the play of history beyond its edges, encroaching on those edges; this is why it is possible to trace the path which leads from the haunted work to that which haunts it. Once again, it is a question of redoubling the work with an unconscious, but a question of revealing in the very gestures of expression that which it is not. Then, the reverse side of what is written will be history itself" (94). We can illustrate this point by reference to F.R. Leavis's study of *Heart of Darkness*: Leavis assumes that Conrad's text contains a hidden essence which is so obvious as to be transparent to the reader, and whose task it is to elucidate it. As Barry comments, "Leavis's fault as a literary critic are that his close readings often turn out to contain lengthy quotations on which there is surprisingly little comment. The assumption is that the competent reader will see there what Leavis sees" (Barry 16). Invariably Leavis either attempts to *complete* what *Heart of Darkness* is saying or actually duplicates its narrative in the very process of making his. In

effect, Leavis adjusts Conrad or *Heart of Darkness* (as the case may be) to serve his own citationary practice.

Following Macherey, it could be argued that a text is “hallowed” by the elusive presence of subjects, words, and significances such as the characters, their locutionary and illocutionary acts, their sheer *presence* against which it constructs itself (otherwise the characters will be “invisible”), but to which the text necessarily “returns”. It is this which impels the text, any text, to reveal itself as a conflict, and as an incompatibility of several meanings, meanings which themselves generate other meanings. It is this, Macherey would argue, which binds the text to reality (of ideology and history). This is why all texts are ideological to the extent that they are historical.

Thus, for Macherey a text reveals, semantically and figuratively, a gap, a disjunction, between rhetoric and reality. For between the two there is, as Macherey would say, “a constant flow from one into the other” (172-3). As he says of Jules Verne’s travel narrative, the “theme of colonization is less explicit, less frequently emphasized, as though it [has] to be kept out of sight” (173). This is the significance of Macherey’s phrase, “the play of history” which, he writes, encroaches on the text’s edges, and its margins. Eagleton has called this “the ideological *torsion*” whose effect is a “set of hiatus” within the text, a *decoupage*, which is a “discrepancy between levels of ‘representation’ [travel] and ‘figuration’ [narrative]” (*Against the Grain* 15). In Jules Verne’s travel texts, for example, the *difference* and *conflict* between narrative (ideology) and reality (travel) appear as the *absence*

(not-said, unsaid, or lack) which divides and binds together “representation” and “figuration”.

Belsey is thus justified in her remark that for Macherey, the task before the critic is not to seek the unity of the text, or to “heal” the wound of difference in it, but to highlight its incompleteness, and the notion that “the omissions which it displays cannot be described... and in the collisions between its divergent meanings, the text implicitly criticizes its own ideology. It contains within itself the critique of its own values” (109). This is why for Macherey both ideology and the text can never acquire a systematic form; why reading involves *prising open* the text, and releasing its diversity in the effort to show up the text in its attempt at the “*fictive* resolution of ideological conflict” (155). It follows from this that meaning is unstable, that a radical otherness shapes all textual production, that form and ideology are intertwined, that the task of ideology is to efface contradictions, that there are limits to ideological representation, that politics and textuality are *inseparable*⁶; and that the question criticism should ask of the text is: “In what relation to that which is other than itself is the [text] produced?” (154).

Literature as an Ideological Form

The answer to the above question is provided in “Literature as an Ideological Form”. In 1969, Althusser published his seminal essay, “On Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses”. The essay was itself the result of Althusser’s reflection on the cataclysmic events of May 1968 in France. In that essay, Althusser breaks with the Hegelian notion of

ideology popularized by Lukacs's influential book, *History and Class Consciousness* as "illusion" or "false consciousness" which masks real material reality. He argues instead that ideology is the material system of social practices, so that ideology is manifested in the material social practices of specific institutions, namely religious, educational, familial, and legal apparatuses. It is these, Althusser argues further, which "interpellate" individuals, i.e. constitute individuals as subjects.

In an interview in *Red Letters* 5 ("Interview" 1-8) Macherey explains this shift in his work from the more "formalist" early work of 1966, concerned as it was with the formal conditions of a text's production and the text's resolution of hidden ideological contradiction within its formal structures, to a concern with the consumption of literature, and its literary and ideological effects (its reproduction) within society and the educational system (Balibar and Macherey 280) In this essay, Macherey (with Balibar) examines the use of literature in the French educational system. His conclusion is that the differences between literary and spoken French serve specific ideological ends through language:

It is important to "locate" the production of literary effects historically as part of the ensemble of social practices... it is important to understand that the relationship of "history" to "literature" is not like the relationship or "correspondence" of two "branches", but concerns the developing forms of an internal contradiction. Literature and history are not set up externally to each other... but are in an intricate and

connected relationship...Very generally, this internal relationship is what constitutes the definition of literature as an ideological form. (Balibar and Macherey 279).

Macherey also concludes that traditional aesthetics is necessarily implicated in the process of ideological domination, and that criticism must break with the traditional idealist concept of Literature (with a capital L):

[The] objectivity of literature is its necessary place within the determinate processes and reproduction of the contradictory linguistic practices of the common tongue, in which the effectivity of the ideology of bourgeois education is realized... This citing of the problem abolishes the old idealist question, "What is literature?", which is not a question about its objective determinance, but a question about its universal essence, human and artistic. It abolishes it because it shows us directly the material function of literature, inserted within a process which literature cannot determine even though it is indispensable to it. (282).

In this essay, Macherey proposes a new methodology for the study of literature, namely that instead of the essentialist term Literature, we should see "literature" as consisting of "literary phenomena" or "literary production" because the literary does not exist outside determinate historical conditions but is reproduced under different conditions in specific periods. Another of Macherey's key contention is that the text or work should be considered not an object in

itself but as a set of specific effects, effects which are determined within social practices:

Through the endless functioning of its texts, literature unceasingly “produces” subjects, on display for everyone. So paradoxically using the same schema we can say: literature endlessly transforms (concrete) individuals into subjects and endows them with a quasi-real hallucinatory individuality. (289).

There is a striking consistency in Macherey's arguments: although he has now shifted attention to the conditions of the “consumption” of literature, or what he calls the “ideological effects of literature”, especially in the reproduction of bourgeois ideology and its institutions, he still holds to the fundamentals ideas of *A Theory of Literary Production*, namely the incompleteness of the text (“the text is materially incomplete, disparate, and diffuse” 284); the rejection of attempts to create a Marxist aesthetics (“the problem is... imposed on Marxism by the dominant ideology” 276); reading as a transformation of the text (Marxist theory “should bring about real transformation, new practices, whether in the production of texts... or in their social ‘consumption’” 277); a belief in scientific criticism as inherently and inescapably the “historical analysis of literary effects” (277); and finally, an abiding commitment to meta-critical methodology which seeks to “analyze the nature and expression of class positions in literature and its output... to define the ideological mode of literature” (277). Indeed the deconstructionist temper of *A Theory of Literary Production*

is reproduced wholesale in “Literature as an Ideological Form”:

The first of principles of a materialist analysis would be: literary productions must not be studied from the standpoint of their unity which is illusory and false, but from their material disparity. One must not look for unifying effects but for signs of the contradictions (historically determined) which produced them and which appear as unevenly resolved conflicts in the text... materialist analysis of literature rejects in principle the notion of “the work”- i.e. the illusory presentation of the unity of a text, its totality, self-sufficiency and perfection... More precisely, it recognizes the notion of “the work” (and its correlative, “the author”) only in order to identify both as necessary illusions written into the ideology of literature, the accompaniment of all literary production. (283).

Thus, the passage from the 1966 book to the 1974 Essay involves the move to a new historised concept of “literature” as pieces of writing which are socially *constituted* as Literature and inserted into the ideological state apparatuses (e.g. the school or educational system) with the aim of producing “specific literary effects” within the class struggle. On this view, the old idealist notion of literature as a timeless essence is rejected in favour of a conception of literature as the process of reading, “the process of constitution, i.e. the making and composing of texts, the ‘work’ of literature” (“Literature as an Ideological Form” 290). In other words, contrary to the tenets of liberal humanist criticism, literature

is more than just a privileged body of texts, but a process, what Macherey calls “the rituals of literary consumption and cultural practice” (290).

The Object of Literature

In a polemical foreword to Macherey’s most recent book, *The Object of Literature*, Michael Sprinker argues, persuasively, that Macherey’s recent book “returns to the question first posed, but scarcely answered, by *A Theory of Literary Production*: what is the object to be studied, analyzed, explained in a yet-to-be constructed science of literature?” (Sprinker ix).

However, Macherey pursues this through an attempt to construct what he calls “a literary philosophy”. For this, he offers a series of close readings of classical texts in French literature and philosophy, the writings of Mme de Staël, George Sand, Raymond Queneau, Victor Hugo, Georges Bataille, Michel Foucault, Louis-Ferdinand Céline, Marquis de Sade, and Gustav Flaubert. Macherey’s strategy is to bring “together in a single speculative project the philosophical and the literary, representation and concept” (*The Object of Literature* 2). As he writes, “if we recognize the truth of philosophy in literature, we must also find some truth in the philosophical sense of the truth in literary writings (2).

According to Macherey, literature and philosophy were inextricably entwined until the 18th century, when the term “literature” assumed a distinctive modern sense, namely a concern with a specific form of writing defined by the

“literary”. He shows, for example, how the great German philosophers, Lessing and Kant, completed this separation through a conception of Reason as a science not adorned by “elegant phrases [*bons mots*]”, and of speculative discourse (philosophy) as distinct from a judgment of taste. In Kant’s elegant formulation of the issue, “there is no... elegant science, but only of a fine art... Genius reaches a point at which art must make halt” (Kant 44).

As in *A Theory of Literary Production*, Macherey cautions in *The Object of Literature* against a methodology, like that of structuralism, which assumes that literary texts “possess a hidden meaning that sums up their speculative purpose”. He proposes a materialist procedure which seeks to “disentangle” within the “literary” what belongs to “the philosophical” by “revealing the pluralistic constitution that necessarily makes them amenable to differentiated modes of approach” (5).

Macherey’s wider point is that there is no such thing as the purely philosophical or the purely literary: the poetic, the narrative, and the rational are entwined and one and the same thing both at once. This is because, he argues further, the texts that are conventionally designated as “literature” are open to philosophical reading, and by the same token, the texts which belong to the field of philosophy show through their surface the work of the literary:

By linking Mme de Staël and Raymond Queneau, Victor Hugo and Louis-Ferdinand Céline... we may be able to outline the general features of a form of thought which is neither philosophical nor literary because it is both, and

to evoke it in the same way that the structure of successive "movements" can be evocative. It is dispersed and concentrated, diluted and condensed in texts whose fabrics and margins were woven by the speculative issues that historically conditioned their production and reception. (9).

It may be argued that the passage above succinctly sums up the critical career of Macherey, which started with a concern for the historical conditions of literary production in *A Theory of Literary Production*, and ends with the reading effects (reception) of texts, philosophical and literary, in "Literature as an Ideological Form" and *The Object of Literature* respectively. Indeed the latter work closes with the programmatic concerns of the former works, namely the rejection of the traditional aesthetic notion of literature (as a timeless, invariant experience), a critique of essentialism (that texts have an indispensable meaning which the critic can recuperate), and a restatement to the de-mythologizing critique (the removal of the mask of the text can only reveal "the void of an absence"). In this sense, Macherey's work connects to post-Leavisite project of theory from the 1960s onwards: to, in the words of Barry, "re-establish connections between literary study" and the academic fields of language studies, history, and philosophy "from which it had so resolutely separated itself" (16).

For Macherey, then, the text cannot be recuperated by a hermeneutic interpretation which fastens to the essence of language, to the attempt to *isolate* some essential property from texts in the form of "a separate body of statements"

(criticism) which is said to have a theoretical content and value and meaning in and of itself. All this Macherey considers the hallmark of a transcendently idealist literary theory and criticism; the “illusion”, as he terms it, of a literature which holds and clothes essentials truths (philosophy, form, meaning, the literary, notion, ideas, poetics, etc.) and which, in turn, give it its critical significance.

Critiques of Macherey

Suggestive and philosophically sophisticated as it is, Macherey's work has been criticized from a variety of positions. The most influential is Eagleton's charge in *Criticism and Ideology* (83-84) and *Against the Grain*, and “Marxist Literary Theory” that Macherey is guilty of formalism because he ascribes undue power to literary form in *A Theory of Literary Production*, and that his conception of *absence* is “an essentially *negative* conception of the text's relation to history” (*Against the Grain* 93). Eagleton queries Macherey's contention that form unproblematically distantiates the ideological because it does not follow that this distantiation is necessarily subversive of bourgeois ideology. Indeed Eagleton argues that this amounts to essentialism since form is “ascribed a single, eternal effect” (18).

In the same vein, Eagleton is emphatic that Macherey's intrinsic literary science, “which treats the text solely in terms of its production”, is in danger of ignoring the consumption of texts, and suppressing the reality of the text as an historically mutable practice which lives only in the process

of its transaction with particular readers (18). Note that this criticism was penned in 1975 (and reproduced in *Against the Grain*); but it was not until 1981 that the English translation of Macherey's Essay was published, which directly answers Eagleton's charge.

In yet another instance, Eagleton questions Macherey's conception of ideology as essentially non-contradictory and homogeneous. This is unacceptable for Eagleton because ideology is not monolithic, or all-powerful. In other words it does not possess the range and power that Macherey ascribes to it. However, Eagleton explains this as the result of Macherey's view of ideology as an illusion which fiction helps to "fix" to make it the analogue of knowledge. What is more, Eagleton is sharply critical of what he considers Macherey's undue privileging of literature, in an attempt to salvage it from the "shame of the merely ideological [in order] to elevate it to the status of theory or theoretical knowledge (*Criticism and Ideology* 83; *Against the Grain* 19). John Frow has also criticized what he regards as Macherey's "neat separation of text and ideology"; and his ontological conception of the text as an incomplete self-signification (Frow 20).

Even Macherey's post-1966 work, the collaborative Essay with Balibar, has not escaped Eagleton's censure. Specifically, he argues that although Macherey has abandoned the bourgeois idealist category of literature which dominates the 1966 work, he is still prey to the twin errors of "sociologistic functionalism" and "reductionism". That is, literature for the Macherey of the 1974 Essay functions

merely as a particular ideological institution. This Eagleton considers too narrow and homogenizing an argument, for it applies only to the French context in the late 1960s. A related criticism is that although Macherey now works with a much more historised conception of literature, his conceptual methodology falls short of this because he still retains a notion of science and theory not as historical products or social practices but as transcendental vantage points.

This leads to Eagleton's charge that Macherey's is a form of scientism because it presupposes some quite unproblematic transcendental reader or critic. This is a charge echoed by Lee Patterson, that Marxist critics such as Macherey endow the critic's knowledge of the totality (history) with the capacity to pre-determine the historical context that brings the cultural object into being and that consequently governs its interpretation. Thus, for Patterson, Macherey in particular is guilty of the notion that the text is not the source of the critic's knowledge but merely as an occasion for its deployment: the interpreter [Macherey] "possesses a knowledge of the Real (apparently derived from wholly extratextual sources) with which he will unmask the evasions and repressions that empower text; he can say that which the text must always silence because he already knows that which the text refuses to (but from another angle, must inevitably) say" (250).

Thus, for Eagleton and Patterson, the fatal flaw in Macherey's procedure is the assumption that the critic could unmask the hidden effects or workings of ideology and the conditions of the text's production, without her analysis being

carried out from a transcendental point in history and without her critique being itself in principle vulnerable to meta-critique by another critique. This issue touches on the vexed question of the text-context dialectic. Undoubtedly, Macherey equivocates on this issue in the 1966 work: there, he sees the text as, in effect, a signification of the historical real; in the 1974 Essay he views the text as a full blooded material reality which in fact participates in the reproduction of social reality within the so-called Ideological State Apparatuses. In *The Object of Literature*, he displaces the question all together by replacing “context” with “the philosophical”.

It must thus be admitted that Macherey’s earlier views amount to a kind of upside down Platonism; while his later views are a kind of mechanistic materialism and reductionism. Indeed Reilly sees this as characteristic of all forms of textualism, from the post-structuralist to the deconstructive-Marxist kind represented by the work of Macherey (42). Therefore, while Macherey is correct to say that history produces literature, he fails to realize that, in Patterson’s suggestive phrase, literature can understand the conditions of its own production. Patterson continues:

In certain forms of Marxist literary theory... the epiphenomenal literary text becomes merely an imitation of an imitation of the real: first the historical real then its signification as ideology, and then the literary text, marked by its historical matrix but unable itself to understand that history. (250).

That is indeed a devastating criticism; and it does explain why Macherey had to move beyond the postulations of *A Theory of Literary Production*, to the more historised and deconstructive premises of his later works; and why he is still to theorize the history-ideology-text nexus satisfactorily. Nevertheless, as we shall see below, many of the criticisms levelled against Macherey by Bennett, Eagleton, Frow, and Patterson are misplaced or are applicable only to one or two but not to all of his works. Frow admits this when he speaks of the undoubted sophistication of the 1974 Essay over the 1966 work. For example, by 1996 (ten years after penning this criticism of Macherey) Eagleton turned round to recommend the very critical strategy proposed by Macherey in 1966. Ken Norton has shown how Eagleton, despite his criticism of Macherey's concept of *absence*, has failed to preserve a traditional Marxist theory of the relation of text and history, and thus has, in the end, to adopt Macherey's critique of the theory of reflection with which the latter's concept of *absence* is a much-needed break (109; for a trenchant critique of Eagleton's critique of Macherey, see Newton 108-119).

It is argued below that the critics' fundamental misunderstanding of Macherey stems largely from their critical lack of a sense of the *philosophical* implication of Macherey's special deconstructive method, namely meta-critique.

The Achievements of Macherey

The first point to be emphasized about Macherey is that he was the first innovative Marxist literary theorist in that he was the first to break decisively with the bourgeois-idealist notion of Literature (with a capital L), the Hegelian notion of Totality, and with philosophical aesthetics. His work marks a radical departure from all the previous tendencies of Marxist criticism. His early work of 1966 was the first major work of Marxist theory to propose a new critical question: "What are the laws of literary production?" (*A Theory of Literary Production* 12). Equally, in "Literature as an Ideological Form", the old idealist question: "What is Literature?" (which implies that literature has a fixed and immutable essence) is brilliantly undermined: the question is meaningless because "it is a question which already contains an answer" and because it is a false question:

Literature is a practical material process of transformation which means that in particular historical periods, literature exists in different forms. What needs to be studied is the difference between these forms. Literature with a capital "L" does not exist; there is the "literary" literature or literary phenomena within social reality and this is what must be studied and understood. (Macherey, "Interview" 3).

This re-definition of literature, this shift away from traditional aesthetic questions, has had far-reaching epistemological consequences for criticism: it has accelerated the abandonment of the hitherto essentialist separation of

fictional and non-fictional writing, literary from non-literary texts. The impact of Macherey's intervention has opened up criticism to the field of textuality, *different* literary modes of production and consumption (reproduction) of texts, texts which are specific practices of writing, that is, as Bennett puts it, texts as "one practice of writing amongst others" (*Formalism and Marxism* 15). Frow's appreciative comment on Macherey's work is worth quoting in full:

Macherey's theoretical innovation consists above all in his displacement of the problematic of an expressive or representational relation between two disparate realms. The conception of literary production as a process implies that on the one hand, as a produced object, the text is seen as a component of the general system of social production, that the "real" is not its object but its institutional conditions of existence; on the other hand, as a productive activity, the text is seen as a distinct practice of signification which is related not to a nondiscursive truth but to other practices of signification. (Marxism and Literary History 21).

Now this "Copernican revolution" as it were in literary studies has led to a productive interrogation of the reading process itself. An example is Macherey's argument in "Literature as an Ideological Form" that a text should be studied in the light of its ideological and literary effects, that is, the *determinations*, institutionally speaking, which, in the course of its reading, have re-worked that text, and have produced new reading formations for it, and thus conditioned its reception. In this manner, the object of Marxist criticism is

less the literary text than the text-for-criticism *and* its constitutive reading formations. This has led Bennett to suggest that:

The proper object for Marxist literary theory consists not in the study of texts but in the study of reading formations...a set of discursive and inter-textual determinations which organize and animate the practice of reading, connecting texts and readers in specific relations to one another in constituting readers as reading subjects of particular types and texts as objects-to-be-read in particular ways. ("Texts in History" 70).

Macherey's methodology has other distinctive merits. For one, his version of Marxist critical theory is both a *theory* and a *practice* of criticism in which the three dimensions of analysis - historical, theoretical, and textual - are integrated. This method of inquiry does not, in other words, stratify reality (both transitive and intransitive) into the separate domains of the historical, the theoretical, and the textual. Instead, it regards these apparently distinct domains as moments of, and instances within, the same process. Loomba expresses this more cogently when she writes, under the influence of Macherey, that "when and where a text is written, the language in which it is inscribed, the traditions and debates within which it intervenes all come together to create a textual fabric" (36).

For another, this model of criticism also permits a conception of the text as speaking against the grain. Thus for Macherey a text is composed, as mentioned above, from a real diversity

of discourses, discourses which give the text its substance. This, by implication, means that texts can never arrive at a unified or internally consistent vision or conception or mimesis of an intransitive world; that the text is marked by contradicting and contradictory discourses, and by gaps, lacks, fissures, aporias, paradoxes, and absences. Hulme illustrates the preceding point graphically when he writes that in the 19th century literature of contact between European and non-European cultures, “no smooth history emerges, but rather a series of fragments, which read speculatively, hint at a story that can never be fully recovered” (12). As Macherey’s conceptual paradigm illustrates further, “heterogeneous discourse” means that the text, to borrow a phrase from Mills (119), is “troubled by undercurrents from a range of different discourses”. This important insight permits a “deconstruction” of the object of inquiry in ways that reveals the object as simultaneously a process of signification and an unstable textual practice, rather than a master-discourse in the precise ways recommended by Macherey, namely that “the autonomy of the writer’s discourse is established from its relationship with the other uses of language” (*A Theory of Literary Production* 59); and that the text is “a contestation of language rather than a representation of reality” (61).

Dipesh Chakrabarty has suggested that “ruling class documents... can be read both for what they say and their ‘silences’” (180). This is a restatement of Macherey’s view that the task of criticism is the analysis of the eloquent silences, the elusive presences of subjects, words and significances, the gaps, fissures and determinate

absences and conflicts and incompatibilities (of several meanings) in the text:

... to know what the writer is saying, it is not enough to let him speak for his speech is hollow and can never be completed at its own level. Theoretical inquiry rejects the notion of the space or site of the work. Critical discourse does not attempt to complete the book, for theory begins from that incompleteness which is so radical that it cannot be located. (A Theory of Literary Production 84).

The implication of the view cited above is that *excluded* or silenced "knowledges" are as crucial to the study of the text as the "obvious" or "appropriated" ones. This is of immense theoretical value in the study of 19th century European travel or exploration literature such as Mungo Park's *Travels into the Interior of Africa*, which is, by and large, an appropriated and infiltrated local knowledge. And in this type of literature, the "silences" are also "repressions", elisions, and absences, namely the native informant, the local guide, the friendly local chieftain, and other forms local "knowledge" such as medicine, routes, histories and landscapes. This is in fact the only route for the radical critic to take so as to avoid the mimeticism by which historians and other critics have traditionally approached exploration writing. Macherey's insight enhances the detecting and analysis of the silent inscription of the involvement of the indigenous peoples in the production of the hegemonic texts of exploration. This repressed dialogue between the alien writer or explorer (Mungo Park) and the native-informant (the local guide) or indeed the contradictions of a "master" discourse built on the

repressed “authority” of the native-informant not only allows for resistance but also the type of discourse encoded by the exploration text.

This leads us to Macherey's most important methodological contribution - the concept of *absence*. One persistent weakness of both liberal humanist criticism and Hermeneutics-oriented reception or reader-response theory, as exemplified by the work of F.R. Leavis and Hans-George Gadamer respectively are hyper-referentiality and super-idealism respectively. For the former the literary text, or any text for that matter, is (more or less) a copy of reality. For the latter, the text is said to be a mere representation, or a *horizon* of possibility. In the first, the transitive order is reduced to the ontological one; in the second, the ontological (intransitive) dimension is reduced to the transitive (mind-dependent) one. In both instances, criticism or analysis is regarded as the reverse of a *disruptive* practice which would not only “make speak” that which is silent, but also make presence absence. Indeed Macherey's concept of absence, which logically flows from his concept of silence, the non-said of the text, is even vindicated by contemporary philosophy of science:

Absence is ontologically prior to presence, and it is essential to the ontology of causality, spatio-temporality, totality, agency and morality. Thus no purely positive world could exist. Moreover [the denial of absence] would itself be an absencing (real negating) act, resulting in performative contradiction ... any world containing change (e.g. any one containing agency) must contain absencing [absence]. (Bhaskar, Dialectic 371)

This implies that the Machereyan theoretical and methodological model (an anti-Hegelian, anti-Kantian form of Marxist criticism) belongs with what Roy Bhaskar has called a “meta-critique”:

*A “meta-critique” typically aims to identify the presence of causally significant absences in thought, seeking to elicit... what cannot be said or done in a particular language or conceptual system about what is said, done, known, implied or presupposed by means of it; or more broadly, what cannot be said in a scheme about what is done in the practice into which the scheme is connected... A meta-critique is a type, component or precursor of explanatory critique generally. For in the meta-critical movement of thought, as we pass against the limits of conceptual forms, we are continually impelled to explain - - and if needed transform -- the practical activities they induce and by which they are in turn sustained. (Bhaskar, *Scientific Realism* 25-26).⁷*

A meta-critique would look like Macherey’s model, itself a good illustration of the creative development of the classical Marxist method. That is, it would take the form of a dialectical critique, integrating literature and history, the material and the discursive. On this view, any particular text, fictional or non-fictional, literary or non-literary, is conceptualized as *both* fictional and historical sentences; or as factual discourse conditionally and semantically dependent upon a matrix of *fictional* devices. On the terms of a meta-critique such as Macherey’s, the author (although for him there are no authors only writers and producers),⁸ is not

“dead” or drowned in an ocean of discourse or rhetoric, but conceptualized as an ensemble of textual and extra-textual phenomena, that is, the mediated “agency” of history and social reality.

With Macherey, then, the danger of *reductionism* is avoided, that is, the text is not approached as the direct, unmediated and *linguistic* or *discursive* expression of its author or her immediate historical and discursive environment, nor is the author seen as a transcendental figure, a creative authorial presence which *under-determines* the text. For Macherey, then, the text is the product of a labour, the *labour* of the writer who does not create, but fabricates, the materials with which she works:

The author certainly makes decisions, but as we know, his decisions are determined; it would be astonishing if the hero were to vanish after the first few pages unless by way of parody. To a great extent the author also encounters the solutions and resigns himself to handing them on. His narrative is discovered rather than invented, not because he begins at the end, but because certain directions are firmly closed to him. (A Theory of Literary Production 48).

Thus, contrary to Eagleton’s censure, Macherey does not view the critic, the reader of the text, as a transcendental figure, standing above discourse, and pointing out its absences or lacks. Rather he emphasizes the *relationality* of text and author. That is, the text is not *reducible* to its author or to her conscious intentions. The author is, to that extent,

not the “lord and mistress” of her work. Nevertheless, the author is an agent in, and an agency of, a world she has, to quote Bhaskar, “not produced and of which [she] has no automatically privileged knowledge” (Bhaskar, *The Possibility of Naturalism* 45). This is chiefly because there cannot be a world, textual or otherwise, that is ontologically finished or epistemologically completely described. The point is that Macherey’s model of reading is non-logocentric.

It is noteworthy that Eagleton found it necessary, by 1996, to adopt the dialectical fusion of formalism, contextualism, and ideology-critique of the early Macherey which he had previously denounced. Indeed Eagleton contends that a genuinely Marxist criticism is just such a fusion:

Any Marxist criticism worth the name must...adopt a well-nigh impossible double optic, seeking on the one hand to take the full pressure of a cultural artefact while striving at the same time to displace it into its enabling material conditions and set it within a complex field of social power. What this means in effect is that one will find oneself bending the stick too far towards formalism and then too far towards contextualism, in search of that ever-receding discourse which would in allegorical manner speak simultaneously of an artistic device and a whole material history, of a turn of narrative and a style of social consciousness. (Marxist Literary Theory 7; emphasis mine).

In fact, Eagleton's "return" to Macherey began as early as 1981. Consider his definition of the task of Marxist or "revolutionary criticism":

Let us briefly imagine what shape a "revolutionary literary criticism" would assume. It would dismantle the ruling concepts of "literature", reinserting "literary" texts into the whole field of cultural practices. It would strive to relate such "cultural" practices to other forms of social activity, and to transform the cultural apparatuses themselves. It would articulate its "cultural" analyses with a consistent political intervention. It would deconstruct the received hierarchies of "literature": and transvaluate received judgments and assumptions; engage with the language and "unconscious" of literary texts, to reveal their role in the ideological construction of the subject; and mobilize such texts, if necessary, by hermeneutic "violence", in a struggle to transform those subjects within a wider political context. (Eagleton, Walter Benjamin 98)

What else is the above but a summary of the programmatic power of Macherey's works? Thus Macherey has been on the right track all along: his is a remarkably *dialectical* methodology in that, consistent with Marxist explanatory critique, it stresses that the critic or theorist is herself part of the process she studies; and that criticism is, and can only be, an engagement with more than strictly literary issues.⁹ This means grasping a writer and her text as both, to adopt Eagleton's phrase, "artistic device" and "material history", and as both "narrative" and "a style of social consciousness".

Nevertheless, this theory of reading goes beyond a mere “academic” or “disciplinary adequacy”. It aspires to be a *political critique*. That is, it not only *studies* but also *explains* and *critiques* its subject matter as not only a rhetorical or literary or discursive consciousness but as an *ideology*. Therefore, Macherey’s approach to the object of inquiry is also, it should be emphasized, a form or variety of meta-critique, a depth-explanation¹⁰, or, to put it in yet another way, a historically and rhetorically situated hermeneutic, whose *logical* structure takes or replicates Marx’s critique of political economy in *Capital*: a triple critique, of *ideas*, of *practical consciousness* such ideas reflect or ground, and of the *conditions explaining* such consciousness (see Marx *Capital* 956).

Macherey’s method allows the critic to unite the criticism of texts (and consciousnesses) and their conditions of existence; to illuminate or explain a writer’s textual practice and ideological (cognitively defective) conceptions while critiquing such. But this does mean that the critic should work towards the elimination of the condition, action or practice that informs, conditions, sustains or necessitates those textual and ideological conceptions. Here the Machereyan critic passes immediately and unconditionally to a *negative* evaluation or judgment of the object (ideologies, generative mechanisms, social relations, or literary and narrative conventions and traditions) that make such ideological and cognitively defective consciousness necessary.

Conclusion

The triple critique is, to this extent, unique in textual or literary analysis. It is, in the senses established by Benhabib (32-33) and David and Schleifer (3-6), an enduring species of critique. For it is only Marxist criticism, best exemplified by the work of Macherey, which unites conceptual (textual) criticism and social (historical) criticism; evaluation and explanation. That is to say: *only Marxist criticism criticizes its object of inquiry in the very process of explaining it* - so that the task of the critic is not just to interpret the object (false and dominatory beliefs and practices) but to change it (that is to remove its conditions of possibility). Here the literary fuses into the historical, and vice versa: conceptual or literary change implies social and institutional change.

Consequently, the very conditions of the text's possibility are criticized, have been criticized, in being explained. Moreover, Macherey's method is an open, non-deterministic, analytic, for it offers the greatest range of real (non-utopian) possibilities that might be available to a literary-textual critic. On this meta-critical conception, the most powerful *literary* theory is, and should be, the most powerful *explanatory* theory.

To this extent, then, Macherey's theory offers a new and innovatory methodological approach to writing in general: that it be read as real, determinate non-being, as, in a word, an *absence*¹¹, whose absencing and de-construction should demonstrate the promise and possibilities of the radical,

deconstructionist, and demythologizing critique that is Marxist literary theory.

Notes

1. Eagleton also pays tribute to Macherey in *Walter Benjamin*, where he does seem in fact to believe that it was Macherey who pioneered the Deconstructionist method now associated with Derrida. See *Walter Benjamin* 141.
2. It may be said that there is a striking resemblance between Macherey's work and Derrida's, especially their early works, as follows: the critique of logocentrism (the notion that extra-discursive reality is directly given to the subject without a discursive intermediary, also called *parousia*, i.e., the myth of the given); an insistence on the *divided* nature of the sign (*differance*); the denial of an autonomous realm of fiction; the notion that the text transgresses the very laws it sets up for itself, so that it goes to pieces, so to speak. And like the deconstructive method, Macherey's model does not view reading or analysis as the *recovery* of the original intentions of the writer, or as a *complete* interpretation or explanation of the text. In this model, the text cannot be described, that is to say, brought to the stage of conclusive demonstration (closure). This is because linguistic, historical, and discursive fields are not amenable to totalistic analysis, or even to closure. Thus the text and its writer must be held in constant tension and *differance* (*defer-ance*).

3. The term Logocentrism is derived from the Greek term *logos* (meaning “word”, and the associated implication of wisdom and rationality), *logocentrism* is the “metaphysics of presence”, the notion that reality is, and can be, directly given to consciousness, or the subject. Other related senses of the term are the assumption of, or search for, a self-sufficient or originary starting-point which is said to be without contradiction. It also takes the form of the supposition that we could dispense with linguistic signs in writing on the argument that they might inhibit the *direct* contemplation of thought, or the source of meaning, wisdom, and truth.
4. In its ordinary or popular sense, *absence* means lack, void, incompleteness, or emptiness. In deconstructionist forms of criticism, it designates non-existence, and the distantiating and transforming processes of language use or “meaning”. In this sense, *absence* implies constraints, contradictions, non-saids, and non-sayables which may or may not manifest themselves in textual terms. Thus absence is ontologically prior to presence, and that, argues Bhaskar, “it is essential to the ontology of causality, spatio-temporality, totality, agency and morality. Thus no purely positive world could exist. Moreover [the denial of absence] would itself be an absencing (real negating) act, resulting in performative contradiction... any world containing change (e.g. any one containing agency) must contain absencing [absence] (*Dialectic* 371).
5. It is striking how, even the most distinguished radical critics of *Heart of Darkness*, with the exception of Achebe, have fastened on Conrad’s alleged ambivalence

towards imperialism. This view is shared by Eagleton (*Criticism and Ideology* 130-140) and Said (*Culture and Imperialism* 91). The question is: is Conrad's text's ambivalence its own or does it belong to the critical methodologies which claim to have discovered it there? On this, see Achebe ("An Image of Africa" 82-94) and Said ("Two Visions in *Heart of Darkness*" 272-283) and Brooker and Widdowson (243-283).

6. For Macherey, as for Jameson, politics, or the political perspective, is "the absolute horizon of all reading and all interpretation". It is thus not something the critic can do without, or see as an "optional horizon" (see Jameson 17).
7. The critic adopting a "meta-critique" must take care to distinguish what is necessarily inexpressive within the field under study from what is unknown to the agent employing this form of critique.
8. In fact, this insistence that the author is not autonomous is more than just an echo of Macherey's so-called "anti-humanism". It is a philosophical necessity because although the text is a function of specific human intentions and purposes, it is, on a larger scale, produced within a socially determined context. As Marx argues, human beings make history, but not in the circumstances of their own choosing ("The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte" 398); and as Patterson puts it, writing "makes meaning beyond and often other than those the author intended" (269).
9. According to Eagleton "there is in fact no 'literary theory', in the sense of a body of theory which springs

from, or is applicable to, literature alone". Eagleton adds that all "literary" approaches are not "simply concerned with 'literary' writing". On the contrary, such approaches "emerged from other areas of the humanities, and have implications well beyond literature itself" (*Literary Theory* vii).

10. It is instructive that Macherey's concept of "depth-explanation" implies a critique of the structuralist concept of "structure". In the structuralist critical practice, a text possesses an intrinsic meaning, so that the critic's task is to decipher, to bring to the fore, this hidden meaning. Thus Macherey argues that, by implication, the reading produced by the structuralist critic is a copy of the text itself, or to use his sardonic way of putting it, "the simulacrum of the simulacrum" (*A Theory of Literary Production* 143). As he adds, this "entirely unscientific" procedure paradoxically enables the text "to be read *before* it has been written" (141). Thus depth-explanation is another way of conceptualizing Macherey's materialist methodology which gives the text a new dimension, a new critical space, rather than discover a deep structure or meaning which is said to exist in the depths of the text.
11. Politically and methodologically, the concept of *absence* is crucial in any practice, for without it a meta-critique, for example, is well nigh impossible. A meta-critique, for example, identifies a relevant *absence* in a text or theory, and thus indicates an incompleteness, theory/practice inconsistency, "detotalization, split or reification of some kind" (Bhaskar, *Dialectic* 354).

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3. Francophonie ou symphonie? L’endroit et l’envers d’un signe.

Saah Nengou Clotaire

Instituée dans les territoires et départements français d’outre-mer, en Asie, en Afrique du Nord et au Sud du Sahara pendant l’ère coloniale, la langue française a fait pendant des siècles, son grand bonhomme de chemin à travers les cinq continents. Deuxième langue universelle après l’anglais, elle est restée sur une grande partie du continent africain, l’outil par excellence pour les échanges et la communication, dominant quelquefois des langue locales. Si la langue française est officielle dans plusieurs pays africains francophones, elle demeure toutefois le socle sur lequel l’institution internationale de la *francophonie* repose. Le français standard, langue officielle de l’Hexagone (la France), est considéré comme la norme à enseigner dans toutes les institutions primaires, secondaires et universitaires des pays d’Afrique francophone. Mais il faudra aussi compter avec des variétés du français ou *particularismes* qui germent inexorablement dans ces territoires étrangers, très loin de l’Hexagone. En effet les peuples francophones disséminés à travers l’hémisphère sud, malgré leur appartenance culturelle parlent le français comme langue officielle, tout en créant aussi des mots. Cependant malgré le fait que ces francophones parlent déjà plusieurs langues vernaculaires en plus du français, ils tentent tout de même de préserver le caractère universel de la “langue de Molière”. La francophonie notion culturelle, économique, sportive,

philosophique et peut-être aussi un jour, militaire, se vit au jour le jour, se digère, se conçoit différemment, selon des angles de vues variés. Ce n'est ni une valeur absolue, ni une idée fixe, mais un concept qui pourrait bien être remis en question. C'est pourquoi nous voudrions dans le cadre d'une approche comparariste, nous en remettre à un examen critique du concept *francophonie*, tout en évitant de le "gratter dans le sens du poil". La *francophonie* n'est pas seulement un simple vocable du français dont le sens dénotatif (sens explicite) indique le cercle des peuples qui parlent le français, mais il nous apparaît surtout comme un symbole, ou comme signe linguistique décodable.

Le signe, qu'est-ce à dire? Le signe en général signifie quelque chose (*le signifiant*) qui tient lieu (*le signifié*) d'autre chose (*objet/référent*) pour quelqu'un (*interprète*); l'interprète c'est le sémioticien.

Le signe linguistique se définit d'après Thomas G. Winner (1973:89), ainsi qu'il suit:

The linguistic sign is an entity constituted by the relationship of the perceptible signifier and the intelligible object of the signification. (1).

(Le signe linguistique est une entité constituée par la relation entre le signifiant perceptible et l'objet intelligible de la signification.).

Pour Ferdinand de Saussure (1974:98), le signe linguistique c'est l'union du *signifié* et du *signifiant*; c'est une entité

biface (à deux face) qui représente le concept et l'image acoustique. Le signe unit le nom à une chose. (2).

Le mot *francophonie* objet de notre analyse sémiologique, sera considéré au départ comme un signe linguistique décodable, dont il nous appartiendra d'interpréter le signifié et d'en déduire le symbole.

Le symbole ou signe? Le terme "Symbole" est omniprésent dans l'univers du signe et l'on parle du symbole ou signe. La notion de symbole se trouve toujours en compagnie de celle du signe. Le symbole est indissociable du signe et le symbolique indissociable du sémiotique.

Umberto Eco (1992:133) souligne:

pour identifier le symbolique on pourrait adopter la clé sémantique suivante: on a un symbole chaque fois qu'une séquence donnée de signes suggère au-delà du Signifié qui leur est immédiatement assignable à partir d'un système de fonction du signe, un signifié indirect. (3).

Roland Barthes (1992:134) renchérit:

L'étagement du Signifiant et du Signifié constitue le symbole. C'est la distinction Signifiant- Signifié qui permet de visualiser les niveaux de fonctionnement du signe en tant que symbole. (4).

A la lumière d'une autre explication faite par Tadeuz Kouzan (5) (1992: 141), nous appréhendons le signe *francophonie*

comme un signe denotatif, indiquant une collectivité de peuples de pays divers qui utilise en commun la langue française. Cependant au niveau supérieur, il est un *signe* au second degré, c'est-à-dire *symbole politique, culturel et sportif*. *Francophonie* est le symbole de la symphonie ou l'accord des variétés culturelles et linguistiques, rendu possible par l'utilisation du français comme langue dominante. Un nouveau processus de métaphorisation l'élève au troisième niveau, celui de l'idée abstraite et le produit du processus donne *le symbole* (ou le signe symbolique). Ainsi on obtient un *symbole métaphorique* (sens second) qui connote soit avec "symphonie" (effet d'accord/euphorie) ou bien avec "cacophonie" (effet de dissonance/dysphorie). "*Francophonie*" est le signifiant perceptible qui symbolise la *symphonie* (ensemble de choses qui produisent un effet harmonieux), ou bien l'inverse, celle de la *cacophonie* (ensemble d'éléments qui produisent un effet désagréable). Telle est la *fonction référentielle* du signe linguistique, à savoir, définir la relation existant entre le message et l'objet auquel on se réfère. Le terme "Francophonie" est donc un signe linguistique décodable.

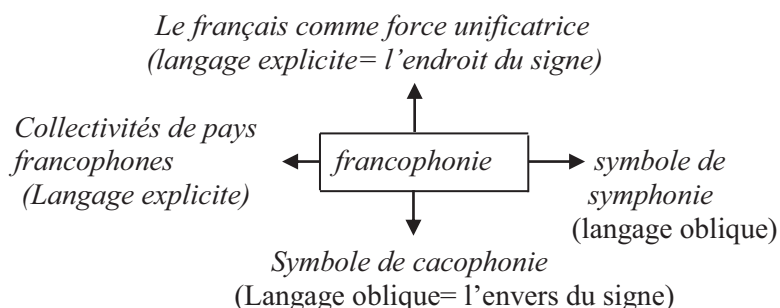
Notre objet ici sera l'étude sémiologique du terme *francophonie*, signe linguistique; Il s'agira en effet, d'analyser *l'endroit et l'envers du signe*, selon la formule consacrée de Gérard Genette (1966:190-191) qui parle de la *métaphorisation du langage* en ces termes:

*le langage... se dédouble lui-même pour ajouter à sa propre signification explicite et littérale ou **dénotation**, un*

*pouvoir supplémentaire de **connotation** qui l'enrichit d'un ou plusieurs sens seconds. (6)*

francophonie, par exemple est un terme créé pour désigner le cercle de constitué par des peuples qui ont en commun le français. Cette collectivité de peuples provient de milieu culturels varies et de différents pays. C'est le sens dénotatif ou *l'endroit du signe*. Enrichi d'un sens second ou connotatif, la *francophonie* devient un symbole, le symbole de la *symphonie*. C'est le message apparent. Puis un troisième sens peu perceptible, en s'y imbriquant nous donne le symbole de la *cacophonie*, c'est *l'envers du signe*.

Considérant la *francophonie*, comme un signe polysémique, nous obtenons la structure suivante:



Décoder le véritable message du second ordre (connotatif et subjectif) dissimulé derrière *francophonie*, nous amène à observer que le signifiant linguistique *francophonie* est un **langage oblique** qui donne à entendre un sens *non proféré*,... *le langage de la connotation*. Genette (191.) (7)

Francophonie: forme dénotative ou l'endroit du signe linguistique

La francophonie c'est la collectivité des peuples qui parlent le français. Car la langue française est fortement diffusée à l'intérieur de cette collectivité répartie sur cinq continents; elle couvre près de 150 millions de locuteurs francophones et un nombre de locuteurs Francophiles aussi important. Mais l'objectif de la France est d'aller plus loin, au -delà de la simple diffusion de la langue française dans le monde. A l'instar du *Commonwealth* chez les Anglophones, la France voudrait faire de cette jeune communauté, un véritable forum de la coopération culturelle, économique et politique. Plusieurs institutions se retrouvent au sein de la "famille francophone", l'on peut nommer par exemple l'Agence francophone de Coopération Culturelle et Technique (ACCT) basée à Paris et les Universités d'expression Française. Aujourd'hui ces institutions ont fusionné sous le label d' "Agence Francophone pour l'Enseignement Supérieur et la Recherche" (AFESR). Cet organe de la francophonie élabore une gamme de programmes variés dans les domaines de l'éducation, de la formation à l'emploi, la protection de l'environnement, la culture et la coopération en matière juridique.

Le pouvoir de la francophonie est aussi garanti par une puissante médiatisation. L'organe de télévision pour la promotion du français TV 5, inauguré en 1986, s'est graduellement installé en Amérique du Nord (TV 5. Québec-Canada), en Afrique et en Amérique latine (1992).

La francophonie s'illustre aussi sur le terrain par la présence de 133 "Centres Culturels Français"(CCF) et autres instituts, répartis dans 50 pays. Ces centres encadrent 140.000 jeunes et adultes. "L'Alliance française" couvre un réseau de 1060 centres dans 140 pays, où la langue française est enseignée à 318.000 apprenants. Au total, quelques 1500 institutions contribuent à perpétuer la présence française dans le monde, en garantissant l'existence de la francophonie. (8)

Au delà du perçu immédiat, du caractère dénotatif et objectif sus-indiqué, quelles autres valeurs nous suggère cette "famille francophone", la *francophonie*.

Francophonie: forme connotative ou l'envers du signe

L'étude du signe s'appuie principalement sur l'analyse du symbole *francophonie*. Nous étudierons le symbole à travers les figures de rhétorique comprises dans le code esthétique et poétique selon la classification de Pierre Guiraud.(1975:44) (9). Charles Perelman (1981:13) dit des figures de rhétorique qu'elles *sont conçues comme l'art de persuader et de convaincre*. (10) Les figures du discours renvoient à des tours ou à des choix opérés sur la langue pour produire certains effets, le **fait** de style produit un **effet**. L'on peut dans ce cas faire allusion à la versification, aux sonorités, à l'image, et aux liens métaphoriques. Le signe linguistique *francophonie* suggère à la fois une image métaphorique et accoustique (sonore). Image métaphorique dans ce sens que le signe *francophonie* stimule notre esprit tout en nous incitant à créer des images mentales. Il faut établir le lien sonore et symbolique suivant: *francophonie* évoque dans sa relation

symbolique avec les signifiés abstraits *symphonie*; *cacophonie*, une image acoustique. Ce lien est établi par un jeu de voyelles et de consonnes:

lien assonantique: répétition des voyelles /o/ et /i/ dans *francoph onie* de même que dans *symp h onie* *cacoph onie*

Ce lien complice est aussi un *lien allitératif*, avec répétition de consonnes /k/, /f/, /n/ dans *francoph onie*– *cacoph onie* et *symp h onie*.

Comme on le voit cette musicalité minutieusement élaborée et l'aspect phono-esthétique du signe ne sont pas un fait de hasard. Car le néologisme polysémique "francophonie" a été créé pour remplir une fonction à la fois référentielle et poétique; celle de représenter spontanément la *francophonie* comme le symbole d'un accord ou bien le symbole d'une *symphonie*.

C'est dans ce processus que nous pouvons établir une équation verbale directe entre le signifiant et le signifié, en transcendant le signifié dénotatif du texte verbal. (Par exemple: la *francophonie* c'est la collectivité que forment les peuples qui parlent français.) Par ces rapports concrets du texte verbal, nous en arrivons au signifié connotatif ou second degré du système sémiologique (texte abstrait, non-verbal) d'après Roland Barthes (122) (11) (Par exemple, la *francophonie* c'est une métaphore symbolique de *cacophonie* et de *symphonie*).

Francophonie comme le symbole de la **symphonie politique**, suggère une collectivité regroupée autour de la même **phonie**, la langue française. Cette collectivité produit un concert symphonique ou des projets socio-économique et politiques sont communément discutés; ou l'on partage les grands rêves d'édification d'un espace francophone prospère. Les rencontres baptisées *Sommet de la francophonie* ont lieu régulièrement. Il y en a déjà existé sept : "Versailles" 1986, "Québec" 1987, "Dakar" 1989, "Paris" 1991, "Port-Louis" 1993; "Cotonou" 1995 ; le dernier s'est tenu à "Yaoundé" au Cameroun en Février 2001 ou une cinquantaine de pays représentés par leur chef d'Etat et ministres, étaient réunis autour du Président Jacques Chirac de la République de France (Hexagone). A la *francophonie* qui vise prioritairement la promotion de la langue et de la culture du français dans le monde, viennent se greffer d'autres dossiers et divers débats politiques, économiques; exhibitions culturelles, production musicales des pays ou la langue française et l'objet d'une promotion active. L'on voit bien que cette institution est devenue au fil des années un **tout englobant** (idée de symphonie). Ces rencontres au sommet sont le lieu par excellence pour mettre en évidence l'unité du monde *francophone*. Toutefois, un clin d'oeil est aussi envoyé du côté des pays non-francophones (Nigéria, Angola, Mozambique, Egypte...), qui sont intégrés sous le label de pays *francophiles*, nouveaux adeptes présents en tant qu'observateurs. En parlant des rencontres de la *francophonie* comme les symboles d'un concert politique, il faut y voir surtout l'amplification outre-mesurée d'une l'entente, d'un accord ou d'une harmonie entre différents pays qui utilisent communément le français. Tout cela laisse entrevoir des

signes d'amour dans le groupe de la francophonie / francophilie. Par conséquent il s'en détache aussi l'image positive et trop médiatisée d'un concert en famille, la famille politique de la francophonie, en symphonie.

Francophonie est aussi le symbole de la “**symphonie sportive**”. En effet le sport occupe une place de prédilection dans le concert symphonique des nations francophones. Comme pour cas du *Commonwealth games* chez les Anglais, des rencontres olympiques baptisées *les jeux de la francophonie* sont fréquemment organisées; le quatrième s'est tenu au Canada en juillet 2001. Ces jeux regroupent les pays *francophones* et *francophiles* (lusophones et anglophones). Notons que ces mélanges d'éléments hétéroclites produisent l'effet euphorique désiré. C'est de la “symphonie du sport francophone”, ou bien l'entente francophone et francophiles sous tendue par le sport, qui met en lice tous les recordmen de l'espace francophone, sans discrimination de sexe, de religion, de race et de culture.

Il y a aussi la **symphonie musicale** grace au forum baptisé les *francophonies de la Rochelle*, ou ont lieu tous les 13 juillet en France, des rencontres musicales entre artistes venus de divers horizons francophones et Francophiles, exhibant des sensibilités musicales variées et multiformes, afin d'aboutir a la création d'une symphonie musicale dans le cercle de la francophonie. C'est l'unité dans la différence culturelle.

La *Francophonie* est aussi le symbole de la **symphonie linguistique**. Car Le signe francophonie est une image

métaphorique qui suggère l'accord entre des locuteurs par le fait de parler une même langue. Cela ressemble à un grand concert symphonique, la symphonie des locuteurs de la langue française. En effet tous les pays compris au sein de la francophonie parlent le français comme langue officielle. Cette langue issue du latin, repose sur des canons et des règles prescriptives de la grammaire traditionnelle qui garantissent le bon usage. Car depuis l'époque coloniale jusqu'à nos jours, la langue française parlée dans les territoires d'outre-mer et des ex-colonies française d'Afrique, continue de régner sans partage au milieu d'autres idiomes locaux, avec ses lois prescriptives et l'influence austère de l'Académie française. Le français règne en maître absolu (diglossie) et ce phénomène qui perdure depuis l'époque coloniale, a été bien observé par Pierre Alexandre(1989:34):

Une seule langue est enseignée dans les écoles, admise dans les tribunaux...le français tel qu'il est défini par les gens de l'Académie et les décrets du ministre de l'instruction publique. Toutes les autres ne sont que folklore, tutu panpan, obscurantisme, biniou et bourrée de ferments de désintégration de la République. (12)

La **norme** signifie, principes du bon usage d'une langue imposée dans tous ses aspects, écrit et parler, puis les règles qui régissent la bonne communication entre locuteurs de cette langue. La norme standard du français a des cerbères, les organes exécutifs et administratifs de l'Académie française. La *norme* constitue un garde-fou pour les locuteurs du français, qu'ils soient d'Occident, d'Amérique ou bien d'Afrique. Ecrivains et grammairiens ont de tous temps été

reconnus comme les dépositaires de la norme, du bon usage, malgré des cas licites de *licence poétique*. En dehors de ceux-ci, les autres locuteurs doivent se soumettre aux principes d'usage de la langue. Le caractère symphonique se vérifie par l'obéissance collective et scrupuleuse des canons de la grammaire et de la syntaxe du français, partout où l'on le parle. Tout locuteur, de pays francophones ou francophiles, a le **devoir** de respecter, d'observer et de pratiquer la norme standard. La norme pourtant, est perçue différemment:

d'après Vaugelas (1970) *c'est la langue écrite qui détermine l'usage; en cas de litige elle est proposée comme exemple pour la langue parlée* (13). On en arrive à une conception un peu étriquée de la réalité de la langue, et d'après Emmanuel Kwofie (1983:10), *Les normes de la langue écrite quelle qu'elles soient ne sauraient être les mêmes que celle de la langue parlée, même si cette dernière obéit elle aussi à des règles supérieures qu'on désigne règles de convenance. La langue parlée n'a pas besoin de se conformer à la langue écrite puisqu'elle dispose, pour la compréhension de certaines modalités dont la langue écrite est... privée.* (14)

Au total, parler du bon français signifierait, respecter code et lois prescrits par la grammaire et le bon usage. Dans tous les pays de la collectivité francophone, la norme est scrupuleusement observée dans les écoles et étroitement surveillée par l'Académie française. En dépit de plusieurs cas d'idiolectes et d'interférences des langues maternelles avec la langue française, l'influence du français est chose certaine

dans plusieurs pays d'Afrique. Par- contre toutes les variétés (sur la cote ouest – africaine, du Maghreb arabe, de l'Afrique centrale...) que l'on parle ici et là, enregistrées au sein de la communauté francophone, se distinguent sous l'étiquette *des particularismes* du français. Toutes ces variétés ou sous – ensembles du français standard, donnent l'illusion d'un concert de plusieurs harmonies différentes, ou bien une association de plusieurs concerts d'harmonies (philharmonique), fusionnant pour produire la symphonie ou accord agréable des sons hétéroclites; la symphonie linguistique de la francophonie.

Admettre le lien sémiologique entre *symphonie* et *francophonie* c'est se fier surtout à la relation métaphorique établie entre ces deux signes qui tellement se ressemblent à s'y méprendre, aussi bien au niveau de la sonorité (phono-esthétique) que de la musicalité. Pourtant nous pouvons considérer l'éventualité du contraire. Il serait bénéfique encore une fois, de décrypter le signe, en soulignant le lien caché entre la *francophonie* et la *cacophonie*. Le signe linguistique *francophonie* peut aussi connoter l'idée d'un ensemble d'éléments dissonnants, dysphoriques, discordants ou désordonnés. La *cacophonie* constitue à la fois le message caché, le *non-dit implicite* dans *francophonie*. Nous devons pour celà, réévaluer le français dans ses rapports historiques avec les langues locales africaines. La *francophonie* laisserait-elle transparaître des formes de désordre, mécontentement, de grincements de dents, de désaccord et même de tyrannie culturelle?

Heurts et malheurs historiques.

Des notes mal agencées produisent toujours un effet discordant, ou bien dissonant (qui manque d'harmonie). C'est donc cette cacophonie qui a prévalu au cours de la première rencontre entre les colonisateurs français et les populations locales en Afrique. La tentative par l'Hexagone de faire *tabula rasa* des langues vernaculaires tout en imposant *manu militari* le français (langue officielle et voire "nationale") aux populations indigènes, créa à long terme une situation hautement dévastatrice pour le développement des langues africaines ainsi mises à l'ombre.

En effet d'après Jacques Champion (1974:15), la politique française en Afrique inspirée par celle de "l'administration coloniale directe" comme en métropole, visait à supprimer les particularismes, donc à éliminer les parlers locaux (dialectes) au profit de la langue unique, le français, dont l'universalité a été souvent réclamée. Pour comprendre cette situation il faut remonter le cours de l'histoire récente de la colonisation. On se souvient que sous le régime colonial français, l'enseignement en Afrique était obligatoirement dispensé en français dans toutes les matières et à tous les niveaux. Il était interdit aux maîtres de s'exprimer dans les langues africaines. Les élèves qui parlaient leur langue maternelle à l'école, même dans la cour de récréation étaient sévèrement punis et soumis aux chatiments corporels. Notons en passant que ces brimades les repressions, intimidations et brimades existent encore aujourd'hui, dans la majeure partie du système scolaire francophone d'Afrique.(15) On ne parle pas sa

langue maternelle à découvert. Si tel en était le cas, on le ferait soit loin de l'école, ou bien caché sous la table-banc. .

Malgré l'opération "coup-de-poing" sur les langues locales, l'administration coloniale paradoxalement n'a jamais cherché à répandre la langue française dans toute la population, d'ou le fort taux d'analphabétisme qu'on enregistrerait en zone francophone. Ainsi cette administration n'a scolarisé que les élites " fils de notables, de fonctionnaires de l'administration, d'anciens tirailleurs..." qui devaient être immédiatement utilisés dans les services de l'administration coloniale. Abdou Moumouni (1974) écrit sur le cas du Sénégal,

Seuls les meilleurs élèves de l'école préparatoire... sont dirigés sur l'école élémentaire la plus voisine... les autres la plus grande majorité sont rendus à la famille... (16).

Les *rendre à la famille*, équivaldrait à les rendre dans les bras de l'analphabétisme. Pourtant des exceptions confirment la règle. Plus respectueux des diversités naturelles, les Anglais par-contre ont toujours eu pour principe de faire apprendre les rudiments dans la langue maternelle, chez eux comme dans les colonies (Asie, Afrique, Antilles, Indes). C'est la règle au Pays des Galles et dans certaines parties de l'Ecosse; comme au Nigéria ou au Ghana. Cette attitude sans nul doute inspirée par les habitudes de pensée et de tempérament que par les intentions humanitaires (administration directe), a cependant pour résultat une avance considérables des Anglo Saxons dans l'étude des langues africaines et paradoxalement *une diffusion de l'anglais plus*

vaste que celle du français en Afrique. A cet effet Jacques Champion (1974:14) conclut péremptoirement:

Meilleure alphabétisation du milieu naturel,... (équivalent à) meilleure diffusion de la langue de culture, les deux résultats étant vraisemblablement liés. (17)

A cette annihilation des langues, supports absolus de toute culture locale en Afrique, se greffe aussi le peu d'intérêt porté sur les *particularismes* du français parlé en Afrique.

En Afrique francophone ou la langue française s'est fortement implantée depuis deux siècles, l'hexagone a d'abord catégoriquement rejeté les particularismes et toute forme d'indigénisation du français. Puis en évoluant au fil du temps, elle a néanmoins "admis" les particularismes comme étant une forme de parler dans les territoires étrangers, une espèce de français *exotique*. Mais les particularismes du français parlé en Afrique ne sont pas acceptés par la norme standard. Car le seul arbitre autorisé pour la langue française, l'Académie, ne permet pas que de ceux-ci soient enseignés, parlés et écrits sous le label de **français** dans les écoles; malgré leur prise en compte quelquefois dans quelques rares dictionnaires remplis de bon sens(ex. *Larousse Afrique*).

Pourquoi des particularismes?

La cause des particularismes s'explique succinctement par le fait que les Africains en utilisant le français, se trouvent chaque fois en face de nouvelles réalités et situations qui nécessitent la créations de mots nouveaux. Or lorsque la

demande de langue ne correspond pas à l'offre, logiquement l'on crée pour se satisfaire. La demande est très grande dans les pays francophones africains, mais l'Hexagone ne peut suppléer les mots qu'il faut, à l'instant qu'il faut, afin de pouvoir nommer des situations ou des lieux qui s'interprètent selon l'imaginaires des Africains. Parfois ceux-ci recherchent des raccourcis pour dire tel ou telle chose dont ils trouvent l'expression trop longue en français standard. D'où la tentation de créer des particularismes, en se rabattant sur des substantifs existant déjà en français. Les locuteurs d'Afrique font montre d'un sens aigu de l'opportunisme.

Comment s'obtiennent les particularismes?

L'on note chez les Africains une grande liberté de création de mots nouveaux dont le mécanisme s'explique de deux façons:

Premièrement, par la dérivation suffixale. Le suffixe est une suite de sons ou de lettres en langue écrite, qui n'a pas d'existence autonome et qui s'ajoute à la fin d'un mot existant pour former un mot nouveau. l'on prend le substantif français pour créer une dérivation en y ajoutant un suffixe:

Dérivation = substantif (normal) + suffixe (ajouté) > création d'un mot nouveau.

Cas d'une dérivation normale en français standard: Boulange
+ rie = Boulangerie.

Au Sénégal, rare pays francophone d'Afrique où le français parlé est très proche de la norme standard, on succombe néanmoins à la tentation de créer. Voici par exemple un cas de création par dérivation suffixale:

Substantif français: **essence** = liquide pétrolier ou carburant pour automobiles.

Essence + **rie** = mot créé., “**essencerie**” (lieu où l'on vend de l'essence). On dit en français standard: *La station d'essence*.

Débit = couper de la viande en petit morceaux

Débit + **rie** = mot créé., “**débiterie**” (lieu où l'on vend des grillades de bœuf, vulgairement appelées “suya”).

On dit en français standard “vente de grillades”.

Deuxièmement l'on construit des formes du verbe en prenant un substantif et en y ajoutant la terminaison des verbes du premier groupe ... -ER. Création = Substantif + terminaison ... **ER**.

Exemple courant en français: (balai) balay + **er** = balayer.

Mot créé: doigt + **er** = **doigter**. en Afrique “doigter” veut dire “montrer quelqu'un/quelque chose du doigt”: il m'a doigté. (n'existe pas en français standard.) On dit “montrer du doigt”.

Par contre “le doigté” existe en français standard = adresse ou savoir-faire. (ce musicien a du doigté) *Le doigtier* = objet de protection pour un doigt.

Voici en bref quelques particularités inventories, dans le paradigme du sexe (Extrait du *Nouveau Petit Robert*)

(1) Particularismes (français Afrique)

(1) *Enceinter* fam. v.t (Afrique)

Régler fam. v.i (Afrique)

La borderie (fam.) Action de se prostituer.

Border, verb intr. (fam. Afrique)

2) Norme standard usitée (Hexagone)

2) Rendre enceinte (Nouveau Larousse)

Avoir ses règles (menstruer)

(Fam. Afrique: Elle fait la borderie)

- se prostituer en bordure de la rue

(standard: *border* = se placer en

bordure de...

Le *bordel* existe en français comme “maison de prostitution”. Mais pas *la bordelle*, mot créé en Afrique pour dire prostituée.

Quel en est l'intérêt?

Analysant quelques éléments représentatifs pris dans le corpus ci-dessus, on notera *l'intérêt pratique* des particularismes dans la communication. Ceux-ci portent les valeurs suivantes: l'économie, la contraction, la concision, l'explicitation. Par exemple, l'adjectif français *enceinte*: verbalisé par dérivation suffixale, ce mot donne *enceinter*; mot d'Afrique qui se dit en terme standard “rendre enceinte”. Nous remarquerons qu'il y a économie par la réduction de deux monèmes contre un seul, pour rendre la même idée. Autres exemples avec le mot “doigter”... “régler”, “border”...

les conséquences?

Avec les particularismes, les mots changent de contenu, affrontant ainsi la rigueur académique. Cette liberté de création montre que l'Africain a le génie d'innover; non pas cette volonté mesquine d'appropriation de la langue française

comme des critiques le remarquent souvent, mais une *volonté de partage du français*, langue commune pour tous, malgré l'austère présence et l'étroite surveillance de l'Académie française. Il serait souhaitable que de tels particularismes chargés de bon sens, puissent évoluer de ce ghetto conceptuel de "tournure familiale", pour accéder à la norme standard, parler et écrit. Ces apports externes devraient donc être perçus comme d'éléments enrichissants pour le français, mais pas comme des termes rivaux. Nous autres locuteurs francophones d'Afrique, à l'intérieur de *l'unité incontestable et nécessaire du français*, voudrions avoir la preuve tangible de notre implication dans son évolution, en temps que co-acteurs et co-actionnaires de la *francophonie*. Et pourtant on nous parle chaque jour de *différences culturelles retrouvées dans l'unité de la francophonie*! Est-ce un vain slogan? La francophonie est-elle vraiment le *patrimoine linguistique commun*? Sinon pourquoi éviter comme la peste, les ajustements de la langue française par l'intégration formelle de schèmes linguistiques exotiques ou étrangers à l'Hexagone, afin de renforcer le vieux vocable essoufflé par l'usure du temps?

La censure de la langue française reste affaire d'Académie française, qui a d'ailleurs son propre dictionnaire, *Le dictionnaire de l'Académie française*. Pourtant d'autres médias (dictionnaires) de bonne facture contribuant aussi à l'apprentissage de la langue française, n'attendent pas toujours l'arrêt de l'Académie pour prendre en compte les *particularismes*. Aussi est-il important de noter que ceux – ci prennent des distances vis à vis de la main mise absolue (justifiée ou tyrannique?) de l'Académie sur l'usage et la

norme du français. Alain Rey par exemple dans sa préface du *Nouveau Petit Robert* (1994) fustige l'absolutisme:

Refusant l'auto-censure d'une norme rigoureuse, il incombe au dictionnaire de l'Académie de remplir ce rôle...Le Nouveau Petit Robert se devrait de noter pour son lecteur les valeurs sociales d'emplois des mots et de sens...Pour les mots en usages propres en Afrique francophone...on précise la zone d'emploi, exemple: français d'Afrique.... (18)

La francophonie aujourd'hui ne présenterait qu'un pale reflet de la véritable symphonie. La collectivité nous apparaîtrait tel un groupe chantant une même chanson avec des sons et des accents hétéroclites; mais le résultat en est que l'on perçoit plusieurs chansons. On se demande même si la langue de l'Hexagone est si parfaite au point de recuser des idées novatrices? Jacques Champion (1974:110) répond:

Nous ne pouvons pas nous vanter nous Français d'avoir le monopole du français correct. Les Africains eux-mêmes nous le rappellent parfois, nous l'avons vu... (19)

Et comme si cela ne suffisait pas, Champion exprime par la suite la suprématie des Belges sur les Français que l'on estimait très rigoureux parce qu'étant à la source, les véritables propriétaires de la langue:

Nos amis les Belges ont la spécialité des recherches formelles et de la grammaire déductive et dogmatique, comme s'ils se sentaient les garants de la tradition la plus

*menacée. Nous ne saurions oublier que la meilleure grammaire traditionnelle, indispensable à tout homme qui prétend écrire le français est l'oeuvre d'un Belge, **Paul Grévisse**, auteur du fameux **Bon usage** dont les éditions ne cessent de se renouveler, pour le grand bien de la francophonie. (20)*

Rebaptiser la “langue de Molière”

En Afrique comme ailleurs, l'enseignement de base se devrait d'intégrer les particularismes en les considérant comme des éléments vivifiants, outils de régénérescence du français. Ces vocables étrangers (non pas étranges) viennent non pas pour appauvrir, subvertir ou clochardiser le français, mais pour lui donner une dynamique franchement universelle. A ce sujet Mme Venus Kowégata montre l'importance des apports africains dans la langue française, non plus perçue comme la langue exclusive de Molière (vieille acception) mais comme la langue de tous et par tous. Elle suggère:

Les Africains doivent écrire avec leur saveur, leurs parfums, des odeurs de leurs continents, afin de redynamiser la langue française qui se meurt. (21).

Par ailleurs pourtant, un critique sur les ondes de la Radio France Internationale a déclaré avec une confiance mitigée: **Le français incarnerait la diversité culturelle** dans le monde, devant la **menace d'américanisation** du globe par le commerce, la langue, la musique et la technologie... (22).

Ces propos plus alarmistes qu'optimistes, ne sont que l'expression de la peur de l'autre...(l'Américain), et pour ce qui nous concerne, cela constitue pour l'heure un faux débat; le vrai débat étant d'abord celui de savoir si cette **diversité culturelle** est vraiment **incarnée** dans la francophonie? Ces termes sont créés beaucoup plus pour la résonance médiatique, mais invraisemblables dans le vécu géo-linguistique de la *francophonie*. Parler **d'unité dans la diversité culturelle** laisse sous-entendre que la francophonie est réellement pluriculturelle et pour cela, il faudrait **intégrer** les "autres" avec leurs particularismes, et non pas seulement les **inventorier** (exercice de routine universitaire). A l'heure de la "mondialisation" il faudra renégocier le partage du français, patrimoine linguistique commun à 150 millions de locuteurs, dans le cercle ouvert de la francophonie/francophilie. D'ailleurs il ne faudrait pas perdre de vue que le français n'est ce qu'il est aujourd'hui que grâce à l'apport extérieur au cours de son histoire. Henriette Walter (1997:10-11) écrit à propos:

Sous l'allure...de français, de quantités de mots sont des étrangers bien acclimatés dans notre langue...Lorsqu'une langue emprunte des mots, elle s'enrichit de mille façons. Les langues qui ont contribué à faire du français ce qu'il est aujourd'hui se comptent par milliers.

Exemple:

Le latin classique a donné au français *fragile*

Le néerlandais	<i>Boulevard</i>
Le portugais	<i>camarade</i>
L'italien	<i>caleçon</i>

L e malgache	<i>raphia,</i>
L e bantou	<i>okoumé(bois dur la forêt</i> <i>équatoriale), etc. (23).</i>

Cependant la langue française qui fut pendant très longtemps le réceptacle des trésors puisés dans d'autres langues par l'*emprunt* et pour sa survie esthétique, ne ressent pas à son tour aujourd'hui, l'obligation de prêter attention aux particularismes qu'offrent généreusement des variétés d'Afrique ou bien d'ailleurs. Henriette Walter croit bien comprendre cette pratique *de bonne guerre*, qu'elle déplore ainsi:

La morale de cette histoire c'est que, lorsqu'une langue distribue son patrimoine, contre toute logique ses usagers s'en réjouissent, alors que, si elle bénéficie de mots venus de l'étranger, ils s'en désolent... (24).

Pour étayer notre thèse sur la *cacophonie* dans la *francophonie*, nous prendrons aujourd'hui très proche de nous, l'événement récent de la mort de l'illustrissime poète africain et homme d'Etat, Léopold Sédar Senghor. Cette mort malencontreusement a mis à nu l'esprit "anti-francophonie" de la France, l'image de l'Afrique reniée et la francophonie comme miroir en trompe- l'oeil, ou bien un concept à *prendre avec des pincettes*. Rappelons d'abord que Léopold Sédar Senghor toute sa vie, était célébré en France et ailleurs comme le chantre de la théorie "négritude" et grand apôtre de la *francophonie*; mais ce même Senghor a été laché à sa mort par la France. Ce geste diplomatiquement maladroit, regrettable et sémiologiquement interprétable, porte un sérieux

coup à l'idéal de la *francophonie* et démontre du coup que, loin d'être le cercle d'harmonie, d'accord et de solidarité qu'on a tant vanté et qu'on vante toujours, il s'agirait plutôt d'un véritable chant dissonant ou bien un "souk"(marché) cacophonique, cercle de la trahison. Le très sérieux journal français *le Monde* dans sa livraison de janvier 2002, nous en donne un aperçu limpide:

... Des obsèques de Léopold Sédar Senghor (Samedi 12 janvier 2002), on retiendra une chose: la France n'y était pas. ...une France dont ni le Président, ni le premier ministre, ni leur prédécesseurs, ni chefs de partis n'ont jugé impératif d'honorer la cérémonie de leur présence....Quelques soient les excuses qui pourront être invoquées, quelques soient les messages de condoléances dithyrambiques qui ont été adressés au Sénégal, ce manquement n'est pas justifiable. L'ex premier président du Sénégal est une grande figure africaine mais aussi française...Senghor l'ancien combattant, le poète, l'ancien député, le chanteur du métissage, le porte drapeau de la francophonie, semble cruellement renvoyé pour finir à sa seule africanité et l'Afrique a une bien modeste place dans l'esprit de dirigeants français dont les beaux discours passés (appels à la francophonie) sonnent aujourd'hui faux.

.... Mais on n'en trouvera pas de recevable à la dévaluation symbolique infligée aujourd'hui à Sédar Senghor... La nouvelle politique africaine de la France ... ne se solderait-elle finalement que par l'indifférence, l'oubli, le reniement? (25)

Tout a été dit dans cet extrait acerbe et sans complaisance de *le monde*. “Renier” Senghor c’est par tour de **métonymie**, renier l’Afrique.(la métonymie c’est le fait d’exprimer “le tout par la partie”). D’ailleurs, l’article a été intitulé *L’Afrique reniée*. Or Senghor est l’un des pères de la *francophonie*, à travers sa défense de l’universalité et du métissage culturel; sa vision humaniste de la théorie *négritude* dans le concert des nations civilisées. Par conséquent, l’apport de l’Afrique dans la *francophonie* sous quelques formes que ce soit, a été soumise à l’épreuve du ridicule par cette offense ou cette marque d’ingratitude à la mémoire de l’un de ses grands et dignes fils, Léopold Sédar Senghor. Les circonstances susmentionnées entourant les obsèques de Senghor, sont des symboles d’une valeur sémiologique certaine, qui n’échappent pas au sémioticien.. L’auteur de l’article de *le Monde* nous tend la perche lorsqu’il mentionne **la dévaluation symbolique**, terme que nous décodons comme le signe apparent d’une cacophonie de la *francophonie*. L’Afrique apporte et contribue à l’avenir de la francophonie, mais cet effort est presque inaperçu si ce n’est tout simplement dévalué comme le symbole *Senghor*... voilà en substance, ce que semble nous dire ce texte de *le Monde Diplomatique*.

Le terme *Francophonie* est-il le signe et le symbole métaphorique de la symphonie, comme l’on serait tenté de croire, pris par le charme enchanteur des sirènes de la sonorité et de l’isophonie? En réalite, le signe *francophonie* (ensemble des collectivités qui ont le français comme langue commune) nous suggère plutôt un **oxymoron** (l’opposition de deux contraires): La francophonie aurait donc pour signifié la

“symphonie-cacophonique”, parce que symphonique en trompe-l’œil (vue de surface), mais dissonnante dans sa réalité profonde. De par notre analyse sémiologique, la *francophonies* s’avère être un cercle austère quand on la compare à sa consœur anglaise qui partage mieux son patrimoine culturel, d’où le “Commonwealth”, concept moins abstrait, dénotant d’une valeur positive, l’idée du partage. L’on l’a vu, il y a par exemple une souplesse intrinsèque de l’anglais qui permet à l’écrivain anglophone **d’indigéniser** l’anglais, que ses livres soient publiés en Angleterre, que sa langue soit accueillie et commentée avec enthousiasme par les critiques britanniques qui y ont décelé une contribution au processus inévitable de développement et de renouveau de l’anglais. Peter Strevens (1989:33) souligne à cet effet:

L’anglais est fondamentalement une langue qui emprunte et qui anglicise. Dès le début, il a été dans sa nature d’assimiler des idées... des expressions venant d’autres sociétés et de les intégrer. (26).

John Conteh-Morgan (1989:33) pour nous en donner le cœur net, conclut:

*... Sans **académie** pour déterminer et imposer des normes, l’anglais a plus aisément accepté des variantes- australiennes, indiennes et, en ce qui nous concerne africaines- et a pu les considérer comme valables. La détermination des normes appartient aux communautés linguistiques et non pas à une autorité extérieure et centralisée (l’Académie française). (27).*

En resumant ces deux point de vues, on peut dire que la *francophonie n'intègre point!* Pourrait-on sur la base de ces extraits, poser simplement que la *francophonie* devrait se mettre à l'école de sa consœur du *Commonwealth*?

Qu'à celà ne tienne, notre idéal reste celui de voir une langue française au "cœur ouvert", à l'instar des largesses du *commonwealth* à tous ses adhérents et dans tous les domaines de la coopération: de la linguistique, du culturel à la politique, en passant par le commerce. Or le français est une langue vivante (pas encore morte), qui devrait s'insufler une dynamique contemporaine, nouvelle et certaine, tout en évitant de succomber au spectre de la tyrannie qui ferait d'elle une langue sans énergie, qui prend des rides en faisant du "sur-palce"; hermétiquement close sur elle-même, narcissique, outrancièrement conservatrice, rigoureuse et peu flexible... même après avoir trop emprunté ailleurs.

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4. Willfried F. Feuser: Une Longue Amitie Sans Faille

Olympe Bhêly-Quénium

Je n'ai aucune qualité pour me conformer à la grille proposée pour rendre hommage à Willfried Feuser; l'éminent et ironique Professeur rirait bien s'il pouvait m'entendre, étonné que je cherche le moyen de sauter par-dessus les balises universitaires; puisqu'il a été pour moi un ami digne de ce nom, je voudrais évoquer simplement quelques souvenirs en parlant sans conformisme de ce que fut notre Amitié.

Si ma date de naissance n'avait pas été modifiée à la hausse ou à la baisse, comme c'était la coutume en Afrique francophone où les enfants de ma génération ne pouvaient pas être inscrits à l'école publique avant qu'ils eussent atteint l'âge de dix ans, Willfried et moi étions de la même génération puisque, comme moi, il naquit en 1928. C'est en 1962 que, stagiaire en diplomatie à l'ambassade de France, à Rome, m'était parvenue la lettre d'un inconnu qui avait lu *Un piège sans fin* (1), mon deuxième roman, mais le premier publié en 1960; des années avant qu'à propos de cet ouvrage Jacques Chevrier, dans le quotidien *Le Monde*, eût évoqué le nom du tragique grec que fut Eschyle, Willfried Feuser, en en parlant en termes fort élogieux, avait souligné que ce roman don't des séquences avaient traumatisé mon adolescence au pays natal, était « *une tragédie grecque en Afrique noire.* »

Je ne pensais pas encore à accuser réception de sa lettre quand j'en reçus de lui une autre où il déclarait, heureux d'avoir fait une découverte:

« ... j'ai rencontré à Ife un Français qui lisait votre beau roman; il m'a semblé vous connaître... un peu; d'après lui, vous êtes un grand lecteur d'Homère et un passionné d'Eschyle! Si cette information est exacte, vous comprendrez ma hâte à vous dire que j'avais flairé et vu juste... »

Telle était, depuis 1962, la genèse des trente-huit ans de relations amicales entre le professeur Willfried F. Feuser et moi; un pan de notre correspondance a disparu au cours de deux cambriolages dans mon domicile, mais la lecture de ce qu'il en est resté prouverait que le fait d'être des intellectuels, plus simplement deux êtres humains qui se comprenaient sans perdre de temps avec les comment, pourquoi, oui mais et autres distinguos avait tissé entre nous des liens qui ont généré la tendresse que je ressens encore.

Le 30 février 2000, quand Bettina Kraemer, ma belle-fille dont le grand-père et celui de Willfried étaient des cousins, comme je ne l'ai su qu'en 1998, m'a eu annoncé le décès de mon « vieil ami Will », j'ai ressenti avec une violence singulière la force de nos liens d'amitié jamais distendus; effondré, la nouvelle produisit en moi l'effet d'un effritement de tout mon être aussitôt suivi par l'étrange impression que j'étais dédoublé et que cet autre moi-même s'en allait je ne savais où; je réagis et m'aperçus que mes larmes coulaient. De ma grand-mère maternelle, originaire d'Abeokuta, qui

m'avait imprégné des sensibilités et de mythes *egba*, je comprends mieux aujourd'hui cette pensée selon laquelle « il y a des personnes auxquelles on a été lié par une amitié telle qu'après leur mort, on continue de parler elles comme si elles vivaient encore. »

1962-200. Tout en moi cerne et étreint la durée d'une amitié sans faille, ni anicroche, ni nuage dans nos cœurs d'intellectuels pourtant fortes personnalités qui maintenaient leurs positions en défendant leurs idées; le fil lancé vers moi en 1962, au bout duquel je n'avais pas deviné un hameçon, s'était transformé en un fil conducteur de courant qu'aucune trace de rouille n'a pu entamer; aussi notre Amitié sans faille avait-elle fait de nous comme des frères siamois. Will et moi étions tellement liés que j'ai encore du mal à penser qu'il n'était plus de ce monde; aussi m'arrive-t-il d'utiliser le temps présent quand j'évoque ses souvenirs; en l'occurrence, je choquerais certainement plus d'un lecteur de l'hommage que je lui rends en déclarant: les liens d'Amitié entre lui et moi étaient et sont, par-delà sa mort, plus forts que ceux, génétiques, que la force des choses, qui ne dépendait de moi, avait pu créer entre nombre de mes frères, de mes sœurs et moi. Willfried Feuser était mon Ami-mon Frère; ni Blanc, ni Noir, essentiellement être humain, homme solide, singulièrement intelligent et d'une sensibilité insoupçonnable.

Que dire d'une personne dont la mort m'avait mis dans un tel état? Je n'ai ni ses qualités humaines, ni ses compétences de grand professeur, mais nous étions des amis; nous nous considérions comme des Frères, des sortes de « *Brethren* », comme disait Mary, son épouse. Son érudition me fascinait

autant que l'intuition doublée de perspicacité qui le portait d'emblée au cœur des fondements inconscients ou occultés des textes qu'il étudiait. De tous les critiques littéraires et comparatistes qui se sont intéressés à mes œuvres, il fut le premier à avoir discerné ma nature d'abikou; partant de ce filon, il a su cerner avec autant de précision que de pertinence certains personnages de mes romans et de mes nouvelles aussi. Ses analyses de ma personnalité me laissent parfois pantois.

Bien avant que sous le titre de *A Child in the Bush of Ghosts*, il eût traduit **Promenade dans la forêt**, le rêve que j'avais raconté à André Breton rencontré en 1949, Willfried Feuser fut le premier, voire le seul critique au monde à avoir perçu et appréhendé ma nature et mes réactions d'abikou, en me donnant l'impression de pénétrer directement dans la profondeur de mon ipséité; comme je n'aime pas une telle intrusion, je passai sous silence l'approbation qu'il attendait de ma part; mais la solidité de nos relations, la réciproque connaissance de nos deux familles, l'itération de la fermeté de mes prises de position dans des événements culturelles ou politiques devaient m'obliger à confirmer la réalité que moins des données objectives que l'intuition lui avait permis de subodorer; je jouai cartes sur table et lui écrivis: « *oui, je suis abiku; on n'y croit ou on n'y croit pas, mais c'est ainsi.* »

*

Venant de Nairobi, peu avant la guère civile au Nigeria, j'arrivai à Lagos et annonçai ma présence à Ikoyi Hôtel au professeur Feuser; il m'y rendit visite le surlendemain en

compagnie d'une jeune femme africaine fort jolie et élégante qu'il me présenta:

- *Mary, mon épouse.*

Elle me salua en yoruba, me tendit un paquet en précisant, visiblement intimidée:

"This is a gift for àbikú's Iyawó".

Autant touché par la spontanéité que par la simplicité de son geste, je lui donnai l'accolade; Willfried rit et dit qu'elle ne lui laissait pas même le temps de saluer l'abikú qu'il avait fait sortir du bois. Nous étions gais, heureux ensemble; c'était notre première rencontre. Marchant de long en large dans les allées de l'hôtel, Mary en sandwich entre nous jeta un regard vers son mari, ensuite vers moi et déclara gaîment que c'était la première fois qu'elle se voyait ainsi embarquée par deux hommes. Je les retins à déjeuner; c'était convivial, une sorte de retrouvailles de vieux amis qui s'étaient perdus de vue; la personnalité et la présence de sa femme m'avaient frappé au point que, plus tard, je n'hésitai pas à demander d'elle une photo qui illustrerait une couverture de *L'Afrique actuelle*.

J'ai évoqué au cours du repas des souvenirs de mon enfance auprès de ma grand-mère maternelle à Abeokuta, de mes séjours d'adolescent, de la concession de mon arrière grand-père maternel rasée, etc. Devinant ma tristesse, Mary me fit entendre de ne pas être affecté outre mesure, que le pays semblait parti pour d'autres changements: « *it may be drastic... even tragic.* »

- Je suis de son avis, mais... vous êtes un homme du présent; quelqu'un de socialement dans l'actualité, qui, cependant garde un pied dans le passé, dit Willfried.
- Sure, you're quite right in saying that; well... *oni loni njé*, répliquai-je.
- Ah! *Baba agba!* s'écria Mary.
- I told you he is *àbikú*... typically *àbikú*.

Quand il prononça le mot *àbikú* je le sentis soudain tellement proche de ce qu'il y avait... non, de ce qu'il y a de plus profond en moi que je jetai comme un filet d'affection sur lui et l'appelai simplement *Will*.

- Here we are... my Man, you've a brother.
- I'm deeply moved...
- Well, you, Mary, you're my sister, aren't you.
- Sure, sure... dit-elle.

*

Les fondations creusées ce jour-là, subissant les déblayements nécessités par le temps, devaient se consolider pour maintenir debout, sans chevilles, une amitié sans faille. Un an avant son décès, je lui téléphonai le jour de son anniversaire.

Très ému, il eut un petit rire; je l'entendis ensuite sangloter; comme je gardais le silence il déclara:

- Olympe, mon frère, je suis très diminué... je ne parle pas du fait banal d'être maintenant unijambiste; je suis diminué d'être revenu dans mon pays natal, avec le désir et la volonté de m'y rendre un peu utile, en déposant, ici, ce que, humainement et culturellement j'avais pu emmagasiner en Afrique; il s'agissait – et tu le sais puisque nous en parlions souvent – de contribuer à faire un peu mieux comprendre et à faire aimer l'Afrique et des quantités d'Africains. Les portes... toutes les portes m'ont été fermées au nez; oh, on en a entrebaillé chichement une ou deux; je ne demandais pas l'aumône, je voulais donner...
- Will, c'est sans importance; je savais tes intentions quand tu m'avais écrit: *« Je rentre au pays natal, non pas pour y végéter, mais pour semer quelque chose emporté d'Afrique; si cependant on empêchait Mary de me rejoindre, je retournerais chez moi, sur ma terre d'adoption qui est le Nigeria où je mourai. »*
- Voilà mon testament; tu le tiens, Olympe.
- Rien ne presse...

Il éclata de rire, puis il ajouta:

- Tu sais, j'aurais aimé rester à Port Harcourt sans nuire à personne; mais j'ai été comme éjecté. Faire de la place à quelqu'un du pays n'aurait porté préjudice à personne; je

sais garder ma place dans la vie; la céder à quiconque, capable d'en assumer les obligations professionnelles y afférentes, quoi de plus simple!

- Sans doute; je crois qu'on a pu craindre que ne portent ombrage ta forte personnalité ainsi que ta culture, qui est impressionnante.
- Que c'est idiot! absolument idiot! Ecoute Olympe, je te fais un aveu ce jour de mon anniversaire: je ne mourai pas en Allemagne; ne va pas penser que je n'aime pas mon pays; j'adore ma terre natale, mais je n'y mourai pas; si le hasard en décidait autrement, je serais enterré au Nigeria; je ne quitterai jamais ce pays, ni mon fils Peter, ton ami après moi; tu l'aimais tant...

Il m'envoya peu après une photo de lui, avec une autre sur laquelle Abiodun, femme enceinte, était occupée dans la cuisine; de son écriture rapide était écrit sur une feuille de papier ces quelques mot: « *Voici la petite Abiodun que tu avais portée sur tes genoux, maintenant une belle Dame qui prépare à manger pour son vieux papa impotent; c'est beau, c'est la vie...* »

*

Il avait parlé de moi à Matthias Feuser, son frère; un jour, je reçus de ce dernier une lettre m'annonçant que Willfried était retourné à Port Harcourt; je téléphonai pour obtenir son adresse et il me communiqua le numéro téléphonique d'Abiodun que j'appelai sans tarder pour m'enquérir de ce

que je pouvais faire; elle m'assura que mon old friend était très heureux d'être retourné au Nigeria, qu'elle l'avait installé chez elle où il y avait toutes les commodités pour qu'il s'y sentît bien, et que Mum était très heureuse de retrouver son homme...

Dans le silence de mon cœur se formula aussitôt cette phrase que je ne prononçai pas: « *Sacré Will, il est rentré pour mourir; c'est bien ainsi.* »

Je pu le joindre une seule fois au téléphone et il s'était écrié:

- Ouf! les jeux sont faits! J'ai l'âme tranquille et je peux m'en aller, puis il éclata de rire.

J'étais profondément triste. Je me demande, qui, aujourd'hui, pourrait se faire une petite idée de courroie de transmission des idées et de l'informateur aussi objectif qu'efficace que fut le professeur Feuser pendant la guerre civile au Nigeria: sous des pseudonymes, il m'adressait en anglais ou en français des articles régulièrement publiés dans *L'Afrique Actuelle*, magazine bilingue (anglais-français) fondé par Maryvonne, ma femme, et moi; grâce à lui les lecteurs avaient des événements tragiques qui écrasaient le Nigeria des versions qui complétaient les reportages des collaborateurs permanents, en y projetant un autre éclairage, ou en différaient totalement: le professeur Feuser exposait les faits, présentait les protagonistes évidents ou obscurs, les implications étrangères, qui, n'étant pas philanthropiques, ne se souciaient pas ou guère des « enfants, des femmes, des hommes, des vieillards, bref, des civils qu'on affame et qui

meurent dans l'indifférence de ceux pour qui cette guerre est devenue une aubaine ayant généré une sorte de profession lucrative....»

L'article d'un journaliste français ayant provoqué sa colère, il me téléphona et déclara:

« Ce type est ignoble! Il ne comprend aucune language de ce pays et son anglais est plus qu'approximatif! Je l'avais croisé trois fois en une semaine; il se baladait; je l'ai vu s'amuser dans la piscine d'un grand hôtel; il n'osait pas se hasarder sur le terrain des réalités qu'il a prétendu décrire... c'est à vomir qu'un journaliste ait pu se comporter ainsi! »

- Ecoute Will: je n'ai pas lu l'article en question et tu ne me dis pas le nom de son auteur; je comprends néanmoins ton indignation, ta colère aussi de quelqu'un qui est sur le terrain; ici en France, j'entends dans nos rencontres de journalistes des confrères plus soucieux des intérêts de la France et de la Grande-Bretagne au Nigeria, que des vies humaines qu'on zigousille avec des armes que l'Afrique ne fabrique pas.

Sous le prétexte que "le Nigeria est un pays trop grand", le général de Gaulle en souhaitait la balkanisation; mon opposition était radicale; je n'en faisais pas un mystère au sein du Comité de Rédaction de *L'Afrique Actuelle*, ni auprès des collaborateurs; quand le magazine publia la lettre d'une société bancaire française dont une fuite inespérée m'avait

fait parvenir la copie, Willfried, sidéré et jubilant à la fois, téléphona:

«À ma connaissance, ici au Nigeria, personne ne souffle mot de ces tractations! Vendre la plus grande richesse minière du pays, ce serait le livrer pieds et mains liés à l'impérialisme...»

- Des confrères m'ont traité de cynique à cause de la publication de cette lettre...

« Olympe, je vais être rude mais d'avance je te fais mes excuses: ces gens-là sont des salauds! »

Suffoqué par la violence dans le ton de sa voix, je dis calmement.

- Maryvonne et moi embrassons Mary et les enfants; toi aussi, bien sûr.

Il rit. Je reçus quelques semaines plus tard, sans le moindre commentaire, la lettre ouverte de Madame Laide Soyinka au général Gowon; l'urgence de la situation m'obligea à substituer une page de publicité à la lettre passionnée d'une épouse en désarroi. Le représentant du Nigeria en France ne tarda guère à m'inviter; homme libre très indépendant, ma réponse fut que je l'accueillerais fraternellement au journal, quand il en aurait le loisir; il observa un court silence, puis il accepta en déclarant:

«Monsieur Bhêly-Quénum, you're a man; j'apprécie beaucoup votre esprit d'indépendance; je serai demain dans votre bureau, à 10 heures, O.K.?»

Il fut ponctuel; Ogunsulire, je crois, était son nom; il voulut savoir comment la lettre était tombée entre mes mains.

- J'ai de la famille au Nigeria, mais aussi des correspondants du magazine.
- Connaissez-vous personnellement le professeur Oluwole Soyinka?
- Nous nous étions croisés plus d'une fois; mais cela n'a aucune importance; ce qui compte actuellement, c'est de ne pas laisser pourrir en prison un homme qui a assumé son devoir d'intelligence et de patriote.
- Je sais que votre grand-mère maternelle était d'Abeokuta.
- C'est une référence qui m'émeut.
- Vous êtes très Yoruba; où se situe votre combat pour le Nigeria?
- J'ai passé mon enfance à Abeokuta, mais cet aspect des choses n'intervient pas dans mon engagement: mon combat sans concession, autant politique que culturel, est contre la balkanisation, l'arbitraire et la tragédie qui a cours au Nigeria. Je veux contribuer à faire barrage au néo-colonialisme.

- Il y a chez vous la même fermeté... la même intrépidité que chez Monsieur Soyinka; c'est un *àbikú*; vous savez ce qu'est un *àbikú*, *n'est-ce pas*?
- S'il faudrait appartenir à cette classe de personnes pour mener le combat qu'il mène, j'en suis très heureux; bien qu'*àbikú*, moi aussi, je suis cependant le contraire d'un intrépide; j'ai envoyé deux exemplaires de *L'Afrique Actuelle* au général Gowon.
- Il les a reçus...

Aussitôt que M. Ogunsulire eut pris congé, je téléphonai à Willfried:

- J'ai reçu la visite d'un proche du haut lieu nigerian...

J'eus l'impression qu'il se doutait de l'information dont j'allais lui faire part; peut-être pensait-il qu'il était surveillé et il coupa court:

“Félicitation Big Boss! Tu es la première personne, certainement la seule à avoir réagi et... vite; je ne veux, ni ne peux parler davantage; mais ton geste est encore une preuve de la fermeté de ton caractère et de ton indépendance d'esprit.”

C'était en 1967; plus de vingt ans après la publication de la lettre ouverte de Madame Soyinka, Willfried évoquerait cette époque non seulement dans un article paru dans la revue *Présence Africaine* à laquelle il collaborait, mais aussi dans le

volume de *Mélanges* que m'offrit un groupe d'universitaires international, à l'occasion du 40^{ème} anniversaire d'*Un piège sans fin*.

Un moment très émouvant de notre amitié fut l'annonce, dans *L'Afrique Actuelle*, de la défaite du général Ojukwu six semaines avant l'événement.

« Quelle vision! Quelle prémonition! je me suis demandé si tu n'étais pas devenu fou en publiant un tel article! À l'est du pays, c'est la débandade! On ne sait pas où est le général en fuite... » me téléphona Willfried.

Vivant dans le pays, sensible autant aux problèmes sociaux qu'à la culture, il suivait l'actualité comme un bon journaliste professionnel; observateur impitoyable, les faits, les acteurs et leurs agissements n'échappaient pas à sa sagacité; aussi n'était-il jamais un individu simplement attristé: chacun de ses articles prouvait qu'en contact avec le peuple, il vivait aussi les émotions et les peurs de ses étudiants en danger permanent et dont les ethnies subissaient l'oppression de la guerre civile.

Allemand en fonction dans un pays étranger, il s'était enraciné au point d'y fonder sa famille, le professeur Willfried F. Feuser était une sorte de citoyen moyen engagé. Je peux attester que, quand il parlait de son très cher étudiant Ken Saro-Wiwa, plus tard assassiné par un régime politique criminel, on ne subodorait chez lui ni ses hérédités allemandes, ni son immense culture internationale: Will n'était alors qu'un homme attaché à un autre homme, mais

qui était en situation et qu'il aimait profondément; révolté contre sa propre impuissance face à la machine de crime mise en mouvement pour éliminer cet autre, il m'avait, un jour, posé clairement la question que voici: "*Olympe, quel genre de combat faudrait-il mener en Afrique, pour mettre un terme aux régimes politiques des criminels?*"

*

Revenant de Glasgow avec Mary, Peter et Abiodun, sa famille au complet nous rendit visite dans notre propriété de la banlieue ouest parisienne, à Poissy; Maryvonne ce jour-là arbora la robe confectionnée avec le tissu *adire* que Mary lui avait offert quelques années auparavant, et qui avait déjà fait sensation dans des cocktails; touchée par une telle attention, Mary dit qu'*obirin* d'*àbikú* savait conserver bien les choses et qu'on ne pouvait pas s'empêcher de l'admirer dans une étoffe africaine.

- Si Mary parle ainsi, c'est qu'elle est vraiment heureuse de constater que son cadeau avait plu à Maryvonne, précisa Willfried.

Après le déjeuner, tandis que Maryvonne faisait visiter la maison à Mary et à ses enfants, et que je répondais au téléphone, Willfried, se déplaçant à petits pas face aux bibliothèques, s'arrêtait comme devant les stations de Chemin de la Croix, lisait les titres, prenait parfois un ouvrage qu'il compulsait. Il eut un haut-le-corps, extrait un volume serré entre deux autres et le feuilleta.

- Comme tout Allemand un peu cultivé, je connaissais les *Nibelungen*, *Voyage en Italie* aussi; mais j'ignorais l'existence même du *Serpent vert*, avant de le découvrir ici, dit-il avec une incroyable modestie.

Je le rejoignis. *Le serpent vert*, un conte initiatique de Goethe, était coincé entre *Voyage en Italie* et *Chanson des Nibelungen*. Nous voilà partis dans le jardin, arpentant les allées, discutant de littérature, de politique, évoquant aussi des souvenirs de jeunesse dans nos pays respectifs. Je fis allusion à l'attitude de Goethe, qui ne voulait pas être dérangé parce qu'il écrivait, alors que sa femme mourait.

- Il arrive aux grands hommes de donner des preuves d'inhumanité et de cruauté qui ne les honorent pas.
- Leurs errements d'appréciation aussi; sans avoir jamais mis les pieds sur le continent noir, Hegel, par exemple, a été très injuste; j'ignore ce que Frobenius pensait des jugements de Hegel sur les Africains; il me plairait assez de le connaître.
- Les Blancs touche-à-tout devraient être prudents... très prudents; d'autant plus que mêmes leurs bévues deviennent paroles d'Évangile quand ils sont ce qu'on appelle « grands hommes ». Leurs vues sur l'Afrique et certaines réalités qu'ils ignoraient sont répréhensibles, nuisibles; il appartient à la génération actuelle de chercheurs d'essayer de réparer les erreurs et les aberrations; Frobenius a été admirable: nous devrions suivre ses pas, en allant encore plus loin.

- *Amen!* dis-je, et il fut pris de fou rire.

Au deuxième étage, d'une fenêtre de la salle de T.V., et de jeux pour nos enfants, Mary demanda quelle belle histoire d'hommes rendait si joyeux son mari.

- C'est ton ami *àbikú* qui se moque de Hegel!

Oh! vous les intellectuels... vous ne pouvez pas laisser tranquilles les morts?

Elle invita Will à admirer la maison.

- Ce sera fait de la cave au grenier, quand nous en aurons fini de découdre avec Hegel, répondis-je.
- *God is hearing you!* répliqua-t-elle et éclata de rire.
- À force de faire ainsi le tour de la cour en causant, nous avons tout l'air d'aristotéliens des temps actuels, plaisanta-t-il.
- Tant qu'il n'y a personne pour nous traiter de péripatéticiens, rétorquai-je et il eut un gros rire.

Un autre trait de sa personnalité consistait à détecter l'insoupçonnable dans les ouvrages qu'il lisait: chez lui, lire, c'était accoucher l'auteur en le vidant de ce qu'il y avait en lui et qu'il ignorait ou avait occulté. Je ne citerai en l'occurrence qu'un seul exemple. Ayant lu les huit nouvelles du recueil intitulé *Liaison d'un été* ainsi que quelques-unes,

inédites dont l'ensemble paraîtrait plus tard sous le titre Delta Edoid *La naissance d'Abikou*, le professeur Feuser opéra des choix, les traduisit, les assortit de notes de bas de page et constitua, sans m'en souffler mot, un *Olympe BHÉLY-QUÉNUM's Selected Short Stories*, ouvrage de quelque 270 pages malheureusement resté inédit auquel je n'aurais personnellement jamais songé.

Bien qu'il eût en beaucoup apprécié le tapuscrit que l'auteur lui avait confié et m'eût écrit en s'engageant à la publier, M. Aigboje Higo (*Executive Chairman, Heinemann Educational Books (Nigeria) PLC*), eut ensuite recours à des procédés déloyaux relevant de l'escroquerie qui faillirent générer un conflit entre Will et moi. Amis et vieux complices, nous eûmes assez d'intelligence pour ne pas en arriver à une telle extrémité: le mercantilisme de cet éditeur africain était le dernier de nos soucis, mais ma fermeté d'homme connaissant parfaitement les textes institutionnels en matière de droits d'auteur n'ont pas permis à Monsieur Higo – à moins qu'il n'ait commis une fraude - de publier cet ouvrage dont Will m'avait envoyé une copie de la traduction.

Outre l'énorme travail qu'avait dû nécessiter une telle entreprise, ce qui m'y avait singulièrement frappé, c'était le sentiment d'avoir été cerné, puis, doucement, gentiment, pris dans un filet d'où je pouvais m'échapper; mais où il ne me déplaisait pas de demeurer parce que je m'y sentais très bien dans ma peau. Voilà un aspect de la maïeutique au sens socratique du terme, comme le Professeur Feuser savait l'opérer. Quand je lui en fit l'aveu, il rit et déclara:

«Piéger un *àbikú* machineur de pièges? Je n'aurais pas osé...»

Prodigieux lecteur, singulier analyste de romans négro-africains, très proche de ses étudiants dont quelques-uns ont consacré leur mémoire de licence, voire leur thèse à des aspects de tel ou tel de mes livres, il avait su leur faire de significatifs progrès en français et dans la connaissance de la littérature africaine francophone. La Francophonie doit plus à ce citoyen allemand qui ne tirait pas vanité de sa parfaite maîtrise de la langue française, qu'aux coupeurs de cheveux en quatre dont elle est comme un fonds de commerce ou la tarte à la crème.

*

En m'annonçant l'hommage que l'Université de Port Harcourt voulait lui rendre, son très dévoué et admirable frère Mathias Feuser a eu l'idée de me communiquer la liste de ses écrits et publications; je le savais autant immense bûcheur que bœuf à la charrue, mais jamais je n'aurais pu imaginer qu'il avait abattu, élagué, carié, raboté ou sculpté, voire, en cas de nécessité, poncé tant d'arbres dans la forêt des créations littéraires négro-africaines.

Objectivement, ses travaux transcendent le territoire sur lequel avait gambadé son compatriote Janheinz Jahn que j'avais connu; un débat houleux nous opposa l'un à l'autre après la publication de son *Muntu*, sous-titré: *L'homme africain et la culture néo-africaine*; y abondent poncifs, erreurs et aberrations concernant le "Vaudou"; parlant des

Africains, certains jugements de Janheinz Jahn s'apparentaient à ceux de Hegel qui avait formulé à leur sujet de péremptoires affirmations condamnables.

Au contraire des africanistes qui s'adonnent à d'inintelligibles gymnastiques de comparatistes pour occulter leurs carences, le professeur Feuser n'était pas de la classe des illusionnistes qui ont toujours tout compris; aussi ne se prenait-il pas pour un omniscient; mais il y avait chez lui, comme inné, l'art d'appréhender l'absolu des êtres et des faits; il m'avait dit lors de sa visite à Poissy:

“Se faire une âme africaine n'est pas, et, probablement, ne sera jamais chose aisée pour un Européen qui n'aura pas su oublier son ipséité; comme disait saint Paul, que tu aimes au point de placer la reproduction de son portrait par Rembrandt au chevet de ton lit, il faut être Juif avec les Juifs: il faut, absolument, être Africain avec les Africains, au lieu de chercher à leur imposer des modes de vie, des normes en leur inculquant des idéologies dont ils n'ont que faire pour vivre heureux chez eux; sinon, le voyage, même un séjour d'un quart de siècle, n'aura été qu'un gâchis.”

Salut, magnifique Will!

Par-delà ta mort, àbikú continue de t'aimer fraternellement, de même que Peter, et Mary qui vous a rejoints.

5. Philosophy and Literature: A Portrait of Professor W. Feuser

B. E. Nwigwe

Professor W. Feuser was a man of outstanding intellectual virtues. That description seems to me very apt even though the phrase normally turns up only in the academic discussion of Aristotle's Ethics (Dirlmeier, 1983:1094). The phrase has an odd sound in praising the memory of the dead only because of an attitude all too common - an attitude to which Feuser was opposed both in his thoughts and his life. To commend a man's intellect people think is just to commend some enviable gift of fortune like beauty, health, high birth; a man cannot be counted as meritorious for that but only for the real virtues, the moral virtues that are his own achievements. So, intellectual virtue appears a misnomer, but in Prof. Feuser there was no such alienation.

In a well-enlightened man there is bound to be a good blend between heart and head. Though his literary writing was quite free from posturing and mannerism, it had that style which is a representation of his whole life: a life of humble service in search of the truth. One conspicuous quality is his generosity, which he exhibited at every encounter with his fellow men. Literary critics are often disposed to judge and censor one another's work very harshly. In Prof. Feuser passionate concern to get at the truth did not go with the desire to show how badly others had erred. On the contrary he had a remarkable skill in extracting some strains of precious truth

from apparently worthless material. This was evident in the patient and caring manner with which he engaged and encountered his students and even colleagues, giving listening ear and looking at every detail to ensure satisfaction to all.

Feuser was generous of time and also of effort in helping others especially young students and colleagues who were finding their feet. He would span the length and breadth of the University of Port Harcourt on foot to attend lectures often in the heat of the sun or amidst heavy down-pour.

All were in the spirit of commitment to duty. Another quality that characterized all Feuser's dealings with his fellows and could not but come out in his works and in his person is a great directness and simplicity. He says just what he thinks and why he thinks it in plain words. Feuser has a fine judgement of what measure of exactness was needed at what place, a quality, which Aristotle counts as a mark of a well-educated man. Besides, he did not know or regard artificial boundaries of colours or race, rich or poor, educated or uncouth. He showed by personal example that peace and harmony in the world may never be achieved through high falutin politics or sheer show of force but is rather a matter of an additive effort of every one contributing his or her little quota towards global stability.

In all these and more, especially in his austerity of life, moral, intellectual virtues, simplicity and commitment to duty, Feuser showed a strong kinship of mind with certain well-known traditional philosophers like Immanuel Kant and

others for whom commitment to duty overrides everything else. Though a literature critic, his attitude to philosophy exhibited in his way of life shows that philosophy and literature have really a lot in common even though in many ways they are diverse – a quest which I want to look at in this discussion. In his article “Surgery for the Novel or a Bomb” D. H. Lawrence writes (1961: p117),

It seems to me it was the greatest pity in the world when philosophy and fiction got split, they used to be one, right from the days of myth then they went and parted like a nagging married couple, with Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas and that beastly Kant. So the novel went sloppy, and philosophy went abstract - dry. The two should come together again in the novel.

What D.H. Lawrence says is true in many ways because many great philosophers have also excelled in literary art history. Plato, Augustine, Schopenhauer and Nietzsche were all great literary giants. Others of less genius include Descartes, Pascal, Berkeley, Hume, and Rousseau and so on. In contemporary period Bertrand Russell and Jean-Paul Sartre have both been awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature. But there are others who are less gifted in literary art history and yet rank as philosophers of great genius, namely Aristotle, Kant and so forth. So, even though a lot in philosophy and literature overlap one cannot simply observe that philosophy is a branch of literature. Its quality and importance rest on quite other considerations than literary and aesthetic values. Good literature produced values, which are still our own today, and philosophy grew from the

mythologies by critically re-evaluating the issues they raised. The relationship between philosophy and literature remained evident in the writings of Plato who often did not distinguish between literary engagement as art and literary engagement as philosophy. The dialogue *Symposium*¹ that was literarily meant for entertainment can only be seen as a philosophical work in the light of other philosophical works of Plato.

It is an odious task to attempt a distinction between philosophy and literature. This is because literature includes journalism and scholarly writing. And like philosophy, journalism critically X-rays the society pointing out the ills in it, suggesting ways and means of solving such issues. This is also part of what philosophy does. Like literature, philosophy has almost always remained the same from the beginning thus necessitating Whitehead's judgement that all Western philosophy is a Foot Note to Plato (1938:p29f). From this one may get the erroneous impression that philosophy and literature do not make progress the way science does. But it remains a fact that no one has made more far-reaching development to mankind than Plato and Homer. Philosophers and literary critics have brought far more reaching revolutionary upheavals in history than science can ever think of or imagine. One may simply say that literature is fiction and does not involve the real world in the sense that it involves masks playing roles, pretending, imagining, storytelling, and so on, but they have fundamental, moral and ethical messages to communicate.

As word users we all belong to a literary atmosphere, we tell story of what happened to us and want others to listen in joy

or sympathise with our story. In a similar vein, we are all philosophers of some sort, always asking questions and wondering about issues in the world, taking positions and making suggestions as to how things ought to be and finally reasoning and concluding using certain forms of argument². We all are often involved in critical analysis of our beliefs or those of others and we are often disturbed when others dogmatically hold to so well-worn out positions or refuse to budge from their semi-aesthetic conceptual habits on which they normally rely. In philosophy, one tries to say something that is impersonally true³. You can read the work of a philosopher without knowing the personality of the philosopher, but this is not so with the literary artist – he must possess a personality. For example, D.H. Lawrence, Jean-Paul Sartre, Albert Camus or even Charles Dickens or the immortal Shakespeare have all their personalities represented and revealed in their works. The philosopher does not appeal to emotions but literature is a special technique for arousing certain emotions. Art involves the sensuous, i.e. the visual, auditory and related senses. Philosophy and literature are both truth-seeking and truth-revealing activities – they are cognitive activities. Literature like other arts involves explanations, classifications and organized visions. Good literature does not look like analysis because what the imagination produces is sensuous, mysterious, ambiguous, and particular. Art is cognition in another mode. Sometimes it is classified as untruthful and as applying words, which are inadequate of understanding, being sometimes sentimental, pretentious, self-indulgent and trivial. Because these words have no definite meaning and because literature primarily deals with fantasy many philosophers especially in the

contemporary period, classify literature as often untruthful in the sense that it is not saying anything directly concrete.

Truth in Literature and in Philosophy

To examine this issue let us look at the concept of truth in literature and in philosophy. Philosophers of the English speaking world, especially linguistic philosophers, refer to literature as emotive, living it at best to the psychologists⁴. For them all propositions or statements that are not empirically verifiable – metaphysical, ethical, and fictitious propositions – are meaningless. This critique was based mainly on Russell's theory of definite descriptions (Geach, 1950 pp. 84-88). A technique which Russell applied in analysis of grammatical problems, especially what he described as "denoting phrases". For Russell, the statement "the King of France is wise" is wrongly conceived as a simple proposition in which wisdom is falsely predicated of the King of France. The sentence needs to be construed as a complex conjunction of the three propositions: "Something is France's king" and "Whatever is France's king is wise". For Russell this conjunction is false because the first of its conjunctions is false. So this statement is false because it does not have any definite description. (1919:p35f).

Gilbert Ryle tried to show that this same idea could be applied to the problem of truth in literature. In the article entitled "Imaginary Objects", after listing some of the characteristics and actions which are given of Mr. Pickwick in Charles Dickens's novel. Ryle represented Dickens as telling himself and others that the man whom this description

fits did not suffer so and so. But of course his propositions contain only pseudo-designations because the list of characterizations by which he pretends to designate someone did not all or even most of them belong to anyone. What Dickens did was to compound a highly complex predicate and pretend that someone has the character so signified. If the names of created characters are in this way thought of as complex, co-inherent predicates, then the only way in which creation of such characters can teach us anything is not by presenting us with any general moral, psychological or sociological truths or indeed as Ryle himself pointed out save per accidents any truth at all but by pretending to describe instances of one. The fact that the examples are faked, Ryle argues, tends to render them better as all illustrations.

Generally speaking, in matters of truth, it is not easy to describe what philosophical truths are; there is no one accepted definition of truth in philosophy. But this does not mean that philosophy does not have the ability to discover conceptual errors and false assumptions. The test of truth in philosophy is particularly difficult because the whole subject is so difficult and so abstract. It may not be clear what is supposed to verify what since the phenomena, which justify the theory have to be verified by the theory itself. For this, the philosopher is reminded to be aware of tautology and to constantly look back at the less strictly conceptualized world. Philosophy that does not take off from the actual real world deriving its conceptual framework from the actual real world cannot be philosophy⁵. This remains the old problem between the Rationalists and Empiricists⁶. There is an analogous problem in art or literature even though this is sometimes

invisible because of the natural closeness of art to the world. Both literature and philosophy reveal the world to us making us for the first time to be aware of issues that are so evident but remain often unperceived by us. Art in a special way holds the mirror up to nature. And all art, to Plato, is an imitation (Plato, 1968:Bks. 4ff). It is precisely then in this word “imitation” that philosophy and art part company.

Truth is not verification in the sense of the neo-positivists. In philosophy there are various modes of truth, correspondence, coherence, pragmatic, hermeneutic, and better still, in contemporary philosophy there are innumerable definitions of truth. For instance, and as Wittgenstein says, truth is “what has meaning within context” (1989:139). In other words, truth is not something predetermined, because as we know in the theory of “speech acts” (Austin, 1962:1ff) words can have various applications: for instance, words can be analogically applied, words can be used in prayer, words can be used in greetings, etc. All these challenges present their own levels of meaning. This very important discovery attributed to Wittgenstein in the *Philosophical Investigations* is what justifies the so-called poetic license whereby a well-known word can be applied differently by a poet to achieve some effect. And this is what is behind all structuralist language-application in modern linguistics. The poet may make something a work of the imagination and may lead a reader to get acquainted with this particular thing. Though going through something imaginary, the reader may begin to get acquainted with such imaginary thing as if it were something real. Such knowledge is what might be called knowledge by acquaintance – and not knowing “that”. The poet creates

illusory events just like a painter can create illusory objects. Both are legitimate because as Aristotle tells us the concept “winged horse” (1963:16a16) may seem illusory but it is already rooted in reality: “wing” is something we all know about, and “horse” we know too well. What the imagination does is to bring these two ideas together and create something out of them. The object created out of these two well-known realities may be illusory but yet its meaning can be derived from the meanings we associate with those two other well-known realities. In reality there is nothing like a “winged horse” but the mind or the imagination can still make a meaning out of it. It can create some form of mental delight to imagine a winged horse. According to R.L. Brett, literature declares to us a golden world, a world heightened and charged with a significance that does not belong to the world of ordinary experience (1960:139f). But just as events of a real life have sometimes a meaning so the particular object, which the poet makes, has a meaning. From our acquaintance with particulars we learn to hold that certain propositions are true. Real events have many meanings and we interpret them variously and endlessly. What the poet says is always more than what is said in the poem, and this is notably why many great poems surrendered themselves to varied interpretations and gradual unfoldment of sound and sense.

The novel also says something. The events in a novel, for instance *Pride and prejudice* or any other well-written novel, can enlarge our understanding in much the same way as real events can do. Novels and poems or in fact any form of good literary work can serve very didactic function. Even if the subject is unreal, the characters can teach the value of honour,

love, courage, and so on, a fact, which Martin Heidegger highly endorsed in *Sein und Zeit* (Inwood, 1997:121f). This didactic function is what existentialist literature (as we see in Jean-Paul Sartre, Albert Camus, Dostoevsky) properly characterize. We are told that John Stuart Mill was brought out of his life-long depressive disposition by reading Wordsworth's works. So in essence literary works have great influence not only on individuals alone but also on society as a whole. All that a reader requires to be able to appreciate literary works is to be acquainted with the correct literary apparatus and the poet's modes of expression. This leads us to the next consideration.

Philosophers' Evaluation of Literature

Many philosophers look at art as capable of encouraging false values such as worship of power, status or wealth and so on. For this, there is some hostility between certain philosophers and artists. A very good example of this hostility is that of Plato (Jowett, 1968: Bk.3:304f), who in spite of his use of art – e.g. the dialogues and fictions – was against art. The reason for this is that as a political theorist he was afraid of the irrational emotional power of the artists – their power to tell attractive lies or subversive truth. He favoured strict censorship of all works of literature, regarding some of the mythological stories as very immoral and unbecoming for the moral uprightness of the society and eventually opting for the banishment of the dramatist from the ideal state (Plato, 1968:Bk.304f). As a religious man he was not happy at the way the gods were being represented as being involved in natural human vices and the way artists were hostile to

religion. For Plato, therefore, there seem to be some existing quarrel between art and philosophy – especially poetry. The reason for this seeming quarrel was that in Plato's time philosophy as we know it today was just emerging from all sorts of poetic and philosophical speculations. Plato's thoughts about art was that art was mimesis or imitation – mimesis in a bad sense. He regarded art as essentially personal fantasy as celebrations of good things. He saw it as trivial copying of particular objects with no general significance. With this image of Plato's understanding of art we can imagine how he would have evaluated television shows and all forms of media representations of today. According to him, one ought to look at the real world and think about it and not be content with trivial images and unsavory dreams. Plato's understanding of art can be justified when we look at some of the damaging and degrading forms of art that are paraded today in forms of pornography – all forms of sensuous entertainment, plays and so on.

However, Plato is not right in all perspectives regarding art because there can also be good perspectives of art. Good art is good because it is not fantasy but imaginative. It breaks the grip of our one dull fantasy life and shows us the effort of true vision. Most of the time we fail to see the big wide real world at all because we are blinded by obsession, anxiety, envy, resentment, fear and so forth. We make a small personal world in which we remain enclosed. Great art is liberating, it enables us to see and to take pleasure in what is not ourselves. Literature steers and satisfies our curiosity it interests us in other people and other scenes and helps us to be tolerant and generous. Art is informative; for instance, it

gives us some ideas about other people, their worldviews, customs, etc. This positive evaluation of art or literature is very much endorsed by Arthur Schopenhauer (Payne, 1958:p50f). Unlike Plato who spoke disparagingly about art, relegating it to the level of giving pleasure to the stupid part of the soul whereas the noblest part of the soul sought for knowledge of reality through the ideas, Schopenhauer, on the contrary, thinks that art can convey the ideas because the ideas are intelligible forms which the imagination of the artist tries to elicit. According to Schopenhauer, art removes the veil or mist of subjectivity and arrests the flux of life thereby making us see the real world in its true beauty. For Schopenhauer art is creative in the sense that it is a moral and intellectual striving – to explain the world. In these, then, Schopenhauer sees an identity between philosophy and art: both are efforts to interpret the world. Both philosophy and art serve various roles in the advancement of man and society. Good art and good philosophy can be useful; and for this it would be wrong to discredit either as unproductive towards the overall well-being of man and society.

Merits and Demerits of Philosophy and Art

There are ways in which philosophy damages art. One of the most influential of these is that Marxists see in art an instrument of social revolution. For this, all their plays, novels, sculpture are modelled towards achieving a revolution; but unfortunately what is communicated is propaganda because it presents art in a very sentimental manner. The danger in this is evident in what has happened to

Marxism in the last decades. On the contrary, good philosophy like good art can give society a good orientation.

When we talk about political theories today, liberation movements, Human Rights Movements, the different peace organizations of the world, we discover that they all would have been impossible without philosophers like Plato, John Locke, and the other social contractual theorists. In a similar manner, no one can overlook the important contributions made by such social critics and imaginative writers like Charles Dickens, George Eliot, T.S. Eliot, and so forth. Writers in general, including journalists, philosophers, novelists, have in their various capacities some duty to society. They try to reveal what others do not perceive – though evident. Important names like Voltaire, Rousseau, Diderot and the other great encyclopaedists cannot be overlooked in the formation of modern French thoughts. Generally, writers are influenced by ideas and events of their times. And they may use such events and situations in forging principles of action that may turn the society around, bring it to better situation.

In writing, even if fictions (especially in issues that relate to morals) there can be all forms of value judgment. I say value judgment because in every writing the writer is always making statements, taking decisions, narrating or describing something. Now, since in doing this he is involved in value judgments, we can equally say that he is engaged in some philosophical activities – because value judgment is another way of doing philosophy.

In the third critique – i.e. the *Critique of Judgment* (1911:pp. 11-25) – Kant claimed that the job of aesthetics is to reveal the sense of the world, an attempt which Natural Religion tried in vain to achieve. This means then that aesthetics must be made, according to Kant, to fit into the centre of philosophy, an analogy which theology played before the advent of Francis Bacon and Rene Descartes. But this was like refusing to go through the door but through the window, because aesthetics like metaphysics cannot help us to understand the nature of God, soul, and the will which were Kant's problem with metaphysics⁷.

In this excursus we have tried to see the various understandings of truth as represented by the various schools of philosophy and so on. And the result of our investigation shows that truth since it is something we can formulate through application of language – whether as represented in philosophy, in literature or in any discipline at all – is not something literally predetermined without taking into consideration the circumstances of the writer, the mode of writing and object of the writing.

General Reflection

As we have seen, both philosophy and literature can be informative; they can serve as agents of peace and social well-being. Both can serve also as propaganda media for the manipulation of facts and society. Literature documents a lot of world history. When we talk about slave trade, colonialism, anti-Semitism, and how these social evils came to a stop, we think about the efforts of several literary giants who

through their critical writings stood out against them. The German world, for instance, was originally characterized by a lot of hatred against the Negro. There were all forms of intolerance: for example, anti-Semitism, Xenophobia, etc. But of all intolerance Negrophobia was the worst as documented in several German literature. The black man was seen as the least of his brethren or, worse still relegated to the outer darkness of humanity to gnash his teeth among the brutes. He was perceived as inferior to the other races, morally depraved and diabolical. The symbolic equation representing the black man goes like this:

Black = Evil. (Igwe, 2000: p. 158f)

This characteristic representation of the black man is very evident in Mozart's *Zauberflöte* where Monostatos (a black man) is identified with the forces of evil. And the verse goes this way:

*Ich weiss, dass deine Seele
So Schwarz ist wie dein Gesicht* (Igwe, 2000:p.158f)

[Meaning: "I know that your soul is as black as your face"]

And as late as 1735 in his classification of the races of mankind Mozart defined the Negro as the prototype of the slave. For him, the Negro is crafty, lazy, careless, black and apathetic. He is governed by the arbitrary will of his master. This was as well the view of such eminent scholars as Albert Schweizer and others (1954:p. 55). On the contrary, however,

there were some eminent scholars who thought differently about the black race. One of the most eminent among them was Herder (Igwe, 2000:155ff). He pointed out the dangers of a Eurocentric image of man. For him, if humanity is the ethical destination of man to be arrived at through love and through the virtues of social living, it appears that the enslaved African possesses these virtues to a much higher degree than those who reduced him to bondage. And although they deprived him of his natural nobility, any brutishness or depravity he is accused of is not the work of nature but of man. For Herder, the so-called accursed son of Ham might with equal justification consider his cruel kidnappers 'White Devils' and himself the privileged descendant of original man.

The idea of the unity of mankind, the dignity that is due to every member of the human race, and the freedom he is supposed to enjoy are all constant, recurrent, themes or *leitmotif* in Herder's writings. This can be justified in the following statement where he said.

Nur ein und dieselbe Gattung ist das Menschengeschlecht auf der Erde (Igwe, 2000:158f)

[Meaning: "There is only one human kind on the whole Earth".]

This means that the issues of colour, race, language, etc, are man-made creations and differences. What Herder wrote in his works Feuser practicalized in his life. He was convinced that the ethical destination of man was humanity and that this

could only be achieved through mutual love and mutual tolerance. He was against all forms of media propaganda and false representation of issues. He was always out for liberation, especially the liberation of the black, identifying himself with the black race through marriage and through adopting Nigeria as his second home. He was one of those who believed that to downgrade the black race was to downgrade humanity as a whole. He often lamented the fact that the black man himself was not sufficiently aware of how people have falsely represented him; and he would therefore not tolerate the black man being lazy or dubious as these would confirm the propaganda already designed against him. His advice seems to be this: If the black man wants to escape from the mechanism of alienation and misunderstanding, if he wants to put an end to imperialist propaganda, he has to mend certain evil qualities so that he will be able to find his way into the international solidarity. What Feuser in effect is saying is that the black man has to rise against the evils of slavery, colonialism, and so on, and try to forge a new image for himself in the 21st century. Though dead this stands out as immortal thoughts, which could still carry on the work of such a great nationalist.

Notes

1. Plato's Dialogue – Symposium is mainly meant for entertainment and it is only the context of Plato's writings that it can be taken as a philosophical work.
2. There are two main types of philosophical or logical arguments: the inductive and deductive arguments. The former is argument from individual instances to general conclusion, e.g.: When it rains, the streets are wet. The later is argument from general to particular: Everyone is mortal, John is someone, therefore, John is mortal.
3. Philosophical arguments are supposed to be objective in the sense that they are supposed to obey certain well founded logical rules. For this reason, emotive statements, because they are often based on false premises are not usually regarded as authentic philosophical arguments.
4. Literature unlike philosophy is largely emotive - appealing to the emotions to achieve certain effects. This often is expressed in forms of comedies or tragedies as the case may be, depending on the effect the artist wishes to achieve.
5. The issue of philosophy taking off from the world of experience was greatly endorsed by Plato; this approach was, however, overturned by Hegel who started from ideas as the basis of philosophical dialectics.
6. Rationalism is from the Latin – ratio-“reason”. As a philosophical system of thought, it stresses the power of a priori reasoning to grasp substantial truths about the world. It stresses the predominant role of ideas in

knowledge. Empiricism on the contrary stresses the role of experience in knowledge.

7. Kant's contention is that metaphysics as science is not possible. For him all scientific knowledge is made up of synthetic a priori judgments, that metaphysics to deserve the name science, must likewise be made up of that sort of judgment. For Kant's position on metaphysics, a reading of the *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics* would be useful.

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6. Tribute to Late Professor Feuser

F.N. Ibemesi

“He (She) should have died hereafter.
There would have been a time for such a word
Tomorrow, and tomorrow and tomorrow
Creeps in this petty pace from day to day
To the last syllable of our recorded time;
And all our yesterdays have lighted
Fools the way to dusty death
Out, out brief candle!
Life is but a walking shadow,
A poor player that struts and frets
His hour upon the stage,
And then is heard no more:
It is a tale, told by an idiot,
Full of sound and fury,
Signifying nothing”.

(Shakespeare: *Macbeth*, Act 5, Scene 5)

When the founder of German studies at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka died untimely in 1991 in a ghastly automobile accident, it was as if all hope was lost for the German teaching staff at UNN, all of them being junior academics. Two most senior teaching staff of the then five indigenous staff of German in the Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures were about to defend their Masters Degree dissertations. Luckily for the Department, Professor Feuser had been selected as external examiner for the M.A.

examination. Thanks to Professor Feuser, the examination was successfully held to produce the first M.A. degrees in German which have remained the last because the programme had to be put on abeyance since 1992 due to late Professor Ihekweazu's death which left no other person qualified to supervise a postgraduate study.

However, Professor Feuser continued to advise us, urging us to carry on with the work Ihekweazu left behind. We have carried on with the bachelors' degree programme in German studies, availing ourselves of the opportunity to taste of Professor Feuser's academic 'diet' and fatherly advice in seminars organized by Goethe Institute Lagos and Nigerian Association of Teachers of German (NATOG) for members.

It was during one of the above seminars that Professor Feuser, then retired at University of Port Harcourt, informed us that he was leaving for Germany. We have had the opportunity to meet Feuser at Nsukka, Ibadan and Ile-Ife with his late son. When Professor Feuser announced his return to Germany after three decades and a half, it was clear to some of us that the decision could not have come if Nigerian road, 'death trap' had spared Feuser his dear Nigerian son.

It was with shock that we learned in one of our seminars in the year 2000 that, not only that Professor Feuser experienced an amputation of a limb, due to illness but, that he also lives no more. We felt very sad at the news. But we are convinced that the Creator knows best.

May his gentle soul rest in perfect peace! Amen!

7. L'Afrique a Travers le Prisme de la Diaspora: Regards sur *Heremakhonon* et *Une Saison a Rihata* de Maryse Condé

Martin T. Bestman

« Le drame dont souffre notre peuple, c'est celui d'un homme laissé à lui-même dans un monde qui ne lui appartient pas, un monde qu'il n'a pas fait, un monde où il ne comprend rien. C'est le drame d'un homme sans direction intellectuelle, d'un homme marchant à l'aveuglette, la nuit (...) »
(Mongo Beti, *Mission Terminée*.)

« Moi, je n'aime pas cette Afrique-là »
(Paul Niger)

« Les victimes sont toujours coupables »

(Maryse Condé, *Hérémakhonon*)

La production littéraire négro-africaine, vecteur idéologique, entreprise de démystification, interrogation douloureuse sur l'éternité des blessures de l'aliénation, de la déportation, de la traite, de l'humiliation, du pillage d'un continent jadis étincelant de promesses, nous fait revivre, grâce aux vertus de l'écriture, le drame d'être nègre. Ces blessures qu'on n'efface pas d'un coup de baguette magique, paraissent plus traumatisantes pour les Noirs apatrides éparpillés aux quatre vents de la Diaspora, que pour leurs congénères enracinés dans « l'opacité du ventre maternel ». Car le paysage

antillais, avatar de l'univers africain, imprime dans la mémoire collective, les affres de la dispersion, du déracinement, du dénuement, bref, les stigmates de l'Histoire qui prend l'épaisseur et l'allure troublante d'un drame.

Et quel est le désarroi de l'Antillais lorsqu'il se décide à boucler le cercle en effectuant un retour en Afrique, cette terre rêvée devenue désormais marâtre, mirage, « terre exsangue », regorgeant « de rapaces, de grands carnassiers », de « régimes tyranniques et fascisants » soutenus par les puissances étrangères ! (*Une Saison à Rihata*, pp. 55, 42 et 67). Afrique outragée, mère humiliée. Ainsi, face à la réalité déconcertante, l'imaginaire s'estompe. Malheureusement, c'est presque toujours à ce déchirement qu'aboutissent les phantasmes des héroïnes de Maryse Condé. Par conséquent, à peine le cercle est-il bouclé qu'une nouvelle rupture, cette fois-ci délibérée, et peut-être plus douloureuse, se fait.

Eternelle rupture du cercle. Délivrance impossible, impossible retour à la tendre et tiède douceur de la « nuit utérine », c'est-à-dire « au creux du ventre maternel » d'où le fœtus a été violemment arraché (*Hérémakhonon*, p. 127 et 157). Exil, errance, cauchemar, traumatisme, aliénation, frustration à perpétuité... : voilà quelques composantes psychologiques qui structurent tout un paysage intérieur, lui conférant un relief et une densité particuliers.

Et n'est-ce pas, soit dit en passant, René Maran qui, un des premiers, a défriché une vision révolutionnaire de la réalité africaine, une réalité lourde de l'expérience coloniale traumatisante ? (« La vérité est révolutionnaire », disait un

maître penseur.) La voie ouverte par le préfacier de *Batouala* a été explorée par Simone Schwarz-Bart, Roger Dorsinville, Joseph Zobel, et notamment Maryse Condé dont les récits, que traverse une angoisse lancinante, portent l'accent et la saveur âcre du roman africain contemporain qui articule obstinément un leitmotiv obsédant: le désenchantement né dès le lendemain des indépendances frauduleuses. Chez la romancière de *Hérémakhonon* (Paris, U.G.E., coll. 10/18, 1976) et d'*Une Saison à Rihata* (Paris, Robert Laffont, 1981), l'Afrique n'est plus dévisagée pas les Africains, mais perçue, dévoilée à travers le prisme de « celle qui vient d'ailleurs », par une « étrangère » occidentalisée qui cependant connaît intimement son continent d'origine dans tous ses recoins à force de le porter comme une écharde. Et sous ce *regard* qui se veut à la fois neuf, neutre, objectif, détaché, critique, ironique et saisissant, surgit le visage de l'Afrique nouvelle : nocturne et brutal. A travers ce prisme se désintègre « l'Afrique libre et fière qui montrerait la voie aux Antilles, entraînerait l'Amérique noire dans son sillage » (*Rihata*, p. 54). Bien plus, L'Afrique mystérieuse « comme un météore » dont rêvent les « étrangères » de la Diaspora, se transforme dès lors en « l'ombre de son ombre, fantôme de son fantôme » (*ibid.* p. 116). *Afrique fantôme ! The Dark Continent*. Par la force des choses, la quête de la « grandeur tumultueuse du passé africain », aventure ambiguë de l'héroïne de *Hérémakhonon*, tourne court et débouche insensiblement sur un « voyage au bout de la nuit ». O nuit utérine libératoire ! Afrique noire mise « purement et simplement à l'écart de l'histoire ». (*Un Fusil dans la main, un poème dans la poche*, p. 130. A comparer avec ces mots de Véronica: « L'histoire ne s'est jamais souciée des

nègres », *Hérémakhonon*, p. 26) Matrice énigmatique, mère nourricière éternellement piégée, violée, bafouée, mais tout de même mère de tous. Voici venir le temps des bilans.

Une si Longue Nuit

L'univers africain, tel que nous l'appréhendons à travers le prisme des personnages de Maryse Condé, est un univers en crise, un univers en rupture d'équilibre, un monde aux prises avec le malaise et la déréliction. Ce qui est sûr, c'est que la violence coloniale a joué, et joue toujours, un rôle déterminant dans cette crise ainsi que dans la négation de la conscience politique africaine. En somme, on ne peut pas manquer de rappeler que la colonisation a été, pour l'Afrique noire, une longue nuit tapissée de frayeurs, hérissée de cauchemars. Or, il est notoire que l'indépendance, cette divinité mystérieuse et aux matrices stériles, qui devait exorciser ces cauchemars, redresser la situation en amorçant la reconstruction du continent que la colonisation semble avoir irrémédiablement « vidé de ses forces » (*Hérémakhonon*, p. 121), au fil des jours, perpétue la servitude, replonge le peuple dans la terreur, la stupeur, l'hébétude et le fatalisme en installant une nuit sans nom. Et cela, parce que les indépendances abâtardies, atteintes par le « xala » ou l'impuissance (comme l'a si bien montré Sembène Ousmane dans *Xala*), revêtent le même visage lourd d'épouvantes. Une dure traversée pour la masse bouc émissaire!

De toute évidence, les indépendances africaines, mal-nées, trafiquées, c'est-à-dire octroyées dans une conjoncture où primait tout ce qu'il y avait d'artifice et de jeu de simulacres,

étaient frappées d'inertie conditionnée, soldées, condamnées d'avance. Donc, l'indépendance, ce « merveilleux gâteau d'anniversaire » (*Rihata*, p. 33), ce serpent sans tête, apparaît comme un faux commencement. Y aura-t-il jamais un commencement possible? Il ne faut tout de même pas oublier que pendant la « décolonisation », les puissances occidentales, symboles de forces occultes, ont dressé un plan visant à donner libre cours au règne de l'irrationnel et de l'arbitraire ; elles ont élaboré un mécanisme devant leur permettre de perpétuer la main mise et la volonté de domination téléguidées du monde dominant. C'est à cette fin, qu'après avoir brutalement supprimé les militants nationalistes, les colonialistes ont mis en place des hommes de paille sans scrupules et à qui il n'est pas donné de comprendre le jeu infini du système colonial, ni les exigences de la politique économique internationale. Ce problème, posé dans toute sa dimension tragique dans *L'Harmattan* de Sembène, *Le Cercle des Tropiques* (Fantouré), *Remember Ruben* et *Perpétue* (Beti), surgit de nouveau dans *Une Saison à Rihata*. Disons-le, la liste des martyrs noirs qui devrait peser sur la conscience collective blanche, est très longue. Par trop longue!

Que les caricatures de leaders africains faisant preuve d'arriération intellectuelle et n'ayant pas la conscience et la préparation politiques nécessaires pour la direction d'un pays moderne acculent l'Afrique à une interminable nuit, une nuit monotone et prolongée comme une plainte, quoi d'étonnant à cela ? (Il est vrai que certains dirigeants marionnettes sont « doués d'une intelligence dévastatrice, entièrement tournée vers le mal », *Rihata*, p. 85) N'est-ce pas parce qu'ils sont

compromis et qu'ils sont dépourvus de discernement politique que les dirigeants fantoches méconnaissent l'hypocrisie, les subterfuges et les visées de leur Maître blanc résolument décidé à réduire l'Afrique à l'impuissance et à la pousser au suicide? Ajoutons à ces considérations entraînant l'échec inévitable des indépendances, les infrastructures fragiles héritées du système colonial, sans oublier, bien entendu, les éléments ataviques et rétrogrades qui freinent le développement. Une analyse lucide des causes lointaines et immédiates de la faillite africaine, dont Maryse Condé fait le bilan, s'impose. Sans quoi, on risque d'être condamné à traîner, à tout jamais, un passé lourd d'échecs, à multiplier les faux pas, à tourner en rond dans un cul-de-sac, à rester inexorablement prisonnier de l'Occident, l'Occident qu'il faut, à en croire l'héroïne-narratrice de *Hérémakhonon*, «à tout prix (...) tenir à distance» (p. 218).

Peut-être cette héroïne emblématique de Maryse Condé a-t-elle raison d'affirmer que «les victimes sont toujours coupables» (*ibid.* p. 12; par-delà la fiction romanesque, on a l'impression que la romancière a mis beaucoup d'elle-même dans la création de son héroïne quasi-iconoclaste). Il n'en demeure pas moins vrai que les éternels oppresseurs des peuples africains qui éprouvent un plaisir sadique et voluptueux à pêcher en eau trouble, soucieux aussi de travestir la vérité de l'histoire africaine et toujours prêts à faire des gorges chaudes en brandissant l'étendard du «chaos-qui-s'est-installé-depuis-le-départ-des-Blancs» (*ibid.* p. 293), «chaos», on s'en doute, qu'ils ont ingénieusement mis en œuvre, tirent un bon parti de ce que Sembène appelle «l'analphabétisme politique» de nos dirigeants, et, à la limite, des mouvements convulsifs qui s'emparent du

continent noir, ainsi, réduisant à néant les efforts de reconstruction nationale. Sinon, comment comprendre pourquoi certains dirigeants africains progressistes se heurtent vivement au mur dressé par la conjuration capitaliste concertée? Ce n'est pas notre propos, ni le lieu, ici, de nous étendre sur les dispositifs de l'arsenal néocolonial. Ni non plus sur les profits que tirent les impérialistes blancs de la balkanisation et du sous-développement de l'Afrique. Qu'il suffise d'évoquer les tragiques expériences de Mayéla mises à jour dans *Un Fusil dans la main...*, roman de Dongala.

Que nul n'entretienne l'illusion que «les coloniaux» n'ont pas quitté l'Afrique à leur corps défendant, ou que les Blancs ne font pas tout pour créer l'impression qu'ils nous sont indispensables sur le plan moral, intellectuel ou matériel (cf. *Le Pauvre Christ de Bomba*). Bien au contraire. La preuve en est que certains personnages européens jettent leurs masques, tandis que d'autres dissimulent leurs véritables mobiles sous l'alibi du soi-disant «chaos». Écoutons d'abord le colonel Luc de *L'Harmattan* qui dit tout de go: «Nous continuerons à être là comme dans le passé (...) il faut prolonger notre présence ici, manœuvrer.» (p. 90) Kerke du *Cercle des Tropiques* est encore plus brutal: «L'indépendance ne sera qu'un mythe. Vous m'entendez, un mythe! Que vous le vouliez ou non, nous resterons ici» (p. 86). Quel aveu de taille! Dans la même veine, on lit dans *Remember Ruben*: «Les autorités (coloniales) vont utiliser (Baba Toura) comme le paravent idéal; derrière lui, elles continueront à régner, et tout reprendra comme auparavant... Nous aurons l'indépendance, mais tout sera quand même pareil» (p. 269). Vive l'art de la combine! Le moins qu'on puisse dire, c'est

que cette astucieuse manœuvre se poursuit inlassablement avec tous ses corollaires psychologiques, avec toute la portée politique, sociale et économique que l'on peut envisager.

C'est sous cet éclairage que nous comprenons mieux les faits et gestes de certains personnages blancs dans l'univers romanesque de Maryse Condé. Vient à l'esprit le langage impudent d'un « vieux blanc décrépît » qui affirme tout uniment: « Quel bordel, ils ont fait de ce pays! Quand nous étions là, c'était la perle de l'Afrique (...) l'indépendance, ils la réclamaient à cor et à cri. Hé bien, à présent, ils l'ont » (*Hérémakhonon*, p.176). Echo lointain de l'impertinence de Victor des *Bouts de bois de Dieu*. Discours historique, délirant, gonflé d'arrogance, édifiant et significatif à plusieurs titres. D'abord, parce qu'il permet de dévoiler la résurgence d'un paternalisme invétéré. En fin de compte, tout comme Victor, le colonel Luc, Kerke, etc., c'est donc l'éternité de la domination blanche que préconiserait ce personnage on ne peut plus complaisant. Ce qui est certain, c'est que dans la réalité comme dans la fiction, l'Afrique fait l'objet d'une telle agression quotidienne. Il est indéniable qu'entre le vécu et l'imaginaire romanesque, la lisière est parfois si fragile.

Sans équivoque, la violence verbale et physique fait partie de notre lourd héritage colonial. D'ailleurs, la violence dont l'Afrique de Maryse Condé est le théâtre, apparaît, dans une large mesure, comme l'expression d'une agressivité vécue et refoulée. C'est dire que parfois les oppresseurs sont des victimes transformés en bourreaux. S'il en est bien ainsi, on ne saurait nier que certaines figures politiques grotesques, imperméables et allergiques au sentiment de la justice

sociale, comme Toumany, Mwalimwana (qui signifie : « Notre père »), Ibrahima Sory et son cousin Siradou, de même que tous leurs sbires, se sont laissé féconder par les exemples que l'intrusion européenne a offerts à l'Afrique, exemples qui consistent en chosification, mépris, chicottes, abus, exactions, pillage, humiliation, piétinement, mensonge, bassesse...- arsenal d'une civilisation supérieure que cristallisent ces mots lumineusement poignants: «L'art de vaincre sans avoir raison» (*L'Aventure ambiguë*, p. 47; cf. aussi la préface de *Batouala*, *Hérémakhonon*, p. 48-49 et *Rihata*, p. 89). Voilà ce qui permet à un des «gardes-chiourme» de Mwalimwana de dire aux déshérités : «Vous êtes là à parler d'Égalité, Justice? Est-ce qu'il y avait égalité, justice du temps des Blancs? Ils vous chicotaient, c'est tout» (*Hérémakhonon*, p. 80). Même son de cloche dans *Rihata*: «Les Blancs les avaient piétinés. Des Noirs les piétinaient encore et eux, apeurés, se laissaient faire» (p. 112). Bourreaux blancs, bourreaux noirs! Violence d'hier à demain. Compte tenu de cette longue mise au point, rien ne donne donc le droit ou l'autorité morale au « vieux blanc décrépît » de tenir de pareils propos : Ni l'appareil colonial qui nous a légué un système brutal, ni les manœuvres sournoises de ceux qui s'ingénient à prouver qu'ils sont plus « forts », donc plus « civilisés », en massacrant « du sous-homme », en jetant des Noirs « aux requins », ou en organisant « les Bantustans » (*sic.*, *Hérémakhonon*, p. 12, 90 et 130). Ce personnage français (décrit comme « un des derniers colons (...) De ceux à qui rien ne peut faire quitter l'Afrique : ni le spectre du communisme, ni les menaces de nationalisation, ni les devises raréfiées » (*ibid.*, p. 103-104), oublie peut-être qu'il y avait un temps dans l'histoire où « l'Europe était un bordel »

(*ibid.*, p. 143), ou que les anciennes puissances coloniales s'accommodent toujours des caprices, de la déraison, de la « folie meurtrière » des dictateurs carnavalesques avec qui elles entretiennent des « idylles » obliques (cf. *Rihata*, p. 148). Parfois, il est vrai, l'idylle ne fait pas long feu, et lorsqu'elle tourne aigre ou devient embarrassante (comme dans le cas de l'ex-empereur Jean-Bedel Bokassa 1^{er} qui apparemment faisait bon ménage avec un ex-président blanc ; - on lira avec profit le texte de l'entrevue que Bokassa a accordée à *Jeune Afrique*), le Maître blanc a le loisir de tirer élégamment son épingle du jeu.

Encore faut-il rappeler au « vieux blanc décrépît » que l'exploitation des Africains se joue sous le masque de la Coopération, phénomène moderne de la sollicitude, de l'urbanité et de l'emprise coloniales. Quand on songe que les coopérants présomptueux sont bel et bien au service supérieur de leurs pays, et ce faisant, dans l'obédience de l'impérialisme, la question reste posée de savoir si leur souci ne porte pas atteinte à (ou ne va pas à l'encontre de) l'intérêt africain. Ce serait une grossière naïveté, en effet, que de croire que ces « experts » occultes nous aideront à sortir de notre marasme, ou que la Coopération ne constitue pas une entrave à notre développement. Il se trouve que les Blancs profitent toujours de notre naïveté et de notre confiance : « Dans le fond, c'est bien ce qui nous a perdus : confiance et naïveté. Les Blancs sont arrivés avec leurs perles de verroterie et nous avons donné de l'or. Ou des hommes » (*Hérémakhonon*, p. 44). Hier, les Blancs nous ont dépouillés en faisant miroiter la verroterie, aujourd'hui ils nous

éblouissent avec leur miracle, mieux: leur fétichisme technologique.

Voilà pourquoi Véronica prend son recul vis-à-vis des coopérants; elle affirme que « c'est le dieu CFA qui fait les coopérants traverser les mers » (*ibid.*, p.135). Cette remarque peut être étayée par les mots de Jean Lefèvre: « un contrat de coopération, c'est le l' or » (*ibid.*, p. 306). Vive la ruée vers l'or! On ne le répétera pas assez: l'affligeante présence de coopérants humilie l'Afrique, car elle représente l'image de notre impuissance et de notre dépendance à l'égard de l'Occident. Force est de souligner que les nuées de « conseillers occidentaux », ne font que saigner les opprimés dont ils se gaussent au reste (cf. *Rihata*, p. 32 et 147). « Ces commis voyageurs de l'Europe », se demande Véronica, « sont-ils sincères? Croient-ils vraiment que l'Afrique n'ait rien d'autre à faire que de donner sans cesse et toujours? » (*Hérémakhonon*, p. 189).

Autant dire que la Coopération à sens unique, « la coopération-coopération », selon le mot de l'auteur d'*Un fusil dans la main...*, union sans gloire, avec tout ce que cela suppose de calculs secrets, fait partie d'une gigantesque farce derrière laquelle se déploie, subtilement, un chantage sans limite, c'est-à-dire l'alibi ou la mythologie d'une Afrique peuplée de grands enfants incapables d'assumer leurs responsabilités en prenant en main leur propre destinée. Tout s'explique désormais. Il est permis, alors, de se demander si c'est au nom de la Coopération que les « assistants techniques français et américains » « affamés d'une villa avec jardin, et pas trop loin de la mer », occupent des postes de cadres et de

décision en Afrique (L'Afrique pour laquelle, il faut l'avouer, ils n'ont que mépris), cependant qu'en France, les émigrés noirs sont contraints aux besognes subalternes (*Hérémakhonon*, p. 57, 59). Dans la lignée de l'auteur du *Docker Noir*, de « la Noire de ... » et du *Mandat*, Maryse Condé, par le truchement de son héroïne que hante visiblement l'image phantasmatique d'un balayeur de rue à Paris, nous sensibilise à cette aberration qui invite à la réflexion: Véronica évoque « Paris où les balayeurs Sarakolle caracolent sur les trottoirs » (*Hérémakhonon*, p.41, cf. également p. 236, 237...). Une des conséquences que peut entraîner une telle situation, est sans doute la perpétuation de l'humiliation et de l'état d'infériorité réservés à un peuple rejeté « en marge de l'humanité » (*Un Fusil dans la main...* p. 130), volonté tenace des porteurs de la « Civilisation de l'universel ».

Eu égard à ces considérations, on peut affirmer qu'est truquée et illusoire, une Coopération qui n'est pas animée par les idéaux de la justice et de l'égalité. On est tenté de conclure, à la limite, que la castration, l'hémorragie, la déstabilisation et le malheur du continent noir dépossédé et dévalorisé font toujours la santé et le bonheur du monde blanc nanti. Plus l'Afrique est humiliée, plus l'Occident rusé se sent viril. Voilà ce qui fait dire à Zacharie et au R.P.S. Drumont que « Dieu a créé les Blancs pour le malheur des Noirs » (*Le Pauvre Christ de Bomba*, p. 153-154).

«Les négriers quittent à nouveau la baie de Biafra. Tant de sang sur l'œil glauque de la mer! Et les requins joyeux, ancêtres joyeux du Ku Klux Klan» (*Hérémakhonon*, p. 44).

On s'en aperçoit bien, en menant son audacieuse entreprise de démythification, ou faut-il plutôt dire : son « enquête »? , Maryse Condé s'interroge sur un faisceau de problèmes qui paralysent le processus de l'essor africain. Quand bien même elle focalise son *regard* sur le présent, sur un moment critique de notre évolution, son analyse synchronique est ostensiblement doublée d'une perspective diachronique. De telle sorte qu'on peut suivre le cheminement du continent en devenir. (En effet, Véronica, comme sa Mère-Patrie, est déchirée entre le présent et le passé qu'elle fuit; ces deux poles temporels se superposent aussi bien dans sa conscience que dans la structure narrative, et ne cessent de s'éclairer l'un l'autre). Tant il est vrai qu'elle dénonce les méfaits de la colonisation et de ses avatars, au même titre qu'elle stigmatise « les soleils des indépendances » qui ont apporté un démenti à l'espoir, à l'euphorie et à l'enthousiasme populaire générés par la mobilisation du mouvement de lutte émancipatrice. Elle reconnaît que dès l'aube des indépendances, le destin de l'Afrique a été laissé entre les mains de leaders incompetents, dépourvus de vision progressiste et sans aucun sens de la mouvance de l'Histoire, en un mot, des gouvernants qui, de concert avec l'ancien Maître, hypothèquent leurs pays. Sans doute, notre romancière peut-elle aisément prendre à son compte cette réflexion de Kapinga d'*Un Fusil dans la main ...*: « Nous sommes les plus coupables, car nous continuons à perpétuer le système colonial sous son nouvel avatar, le néocolonialisme » (p. 130).

Maryse Condé ne se contente certes pas d'effleurer les problèmes qui assaillent l'Afrique. Son réquisitoire contre les

mœurs politiques est très dur. D'un roman à l'autre, elle expose les tares de la société, elle nous livre un tableau désolant de l'Afrique actuelle. La malédiction du Parti Unique, le phénomène des dictatures militaires, du despotisme sanguinaire, l'abus du pouvoir politique, la médiocrité fêtée..., thèmes qui prennent une place centrale dans l'univers du roman africain post-indépendance, ne sont pas occultés par la romancière guadeloupéenne douée, incontestablement, d'une impitoyable lucidité critique. A plus forte raison, sa perception de la réalité sociale et les critiques qu'elle véhicule à l'endroit de ceux qui tiennent les rênes du pouvoir, rejoignent-elles celles que l'on trouve dans une galaxie de romans :

The Interpreters et *Season of Anomy* (Soyinka), *A Man of the People* (Achebe), *Le Mandat*, *Xala* et *Le Dernier de l'Empire* (Sembène), *Dramouss* (Camara), *Les Soleils des Indépendances* (Kourouma), *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* (Armah), *Le Cercle des Tropiques* (Fantouré), *Un Fusil dans la main, un poème dans la poche* (Dongala) *Perpétue* et *La Ruine presque cocasse d'un Polichinelle* (Beti), *Une Aube si fragile* (Signaté), *Kotawali* (Menga), *Petals of Blood* et *Devil on the Cross* (Ngugi), *Les Crapauds-brousse* (Monénembo), *La grève des Battù* (Aminata Sow Fall), *Le Bal des caïmans* (Karone), *Le temps de Tomango* (Boubacar Boris Diop), *Le Pleurer-Rire* (Lopes), *Toiles d'Araignées* (Ly) ..., pour ne retenir que ces quelques titres significatifs.

En bref, le bilan que brosse Maryse Condé de l'ère des indépendances est stupéfiant : prolifération et célébration rituelle de la médiocrité ; aliénation de l'appareil d'Etat

répressif faisant penser irrésistiblement à la loi de la jungle ; une «totale désorganisation administrative et politique» (*Rihata*, p. 41); une forêt de visages indifférenciés livrés à la torpeur ; et singulièrement, une «économie de plus en plus chancelante » (*ibid.*), anarchique, anémique, agonisante, du fait du pillage effréné et d'une gestion scandaleuse, suicidaire, pour ne pas dire : masochiste. Et contre cette sombre toile de fond règnent souverains, « toute la clique de sycophantes » secrétés par les indépendances (*ibid.*, p. 48), les mégalomanes, les détenteurs du pouvoir politique grisés par l'exercice de leur force démentielle, accaparés par le perfectionnement de l'art de domestiquer le peuple, étrangers à la déchéance de la masse exploitée, et nullement préoccupés à relever le défi lancé par un cortège de fléaux tenaces qui ont noms : ignorance, superstition, sécheresse chronique, spectres d'épidémies de famine (je dis bien : *épidémies*)... Ajoutez à cela « l'injustice érigée en dogme (...) la misère croissante des uns (...) l'enrichissement spectaculaire des autres (...) la répression, (les) emprisonnements arbitraires, (le) pillage et (...) la corruption » (*ibid.*, p. 110).

Si tout est « sens dessus dessous » (*ibid.*, p. 43), dans les nouvelles sociétés enfantées par les indépendances, ce n'est non seulement parce que l'Europe a réduit l'Afrique « en caricature d'elle-même » (*Hérémakhonon*, p. 143), mais aussi en raison de l'avalanche des valeurs matérielles qui ont fortement contribué à bouleverser nos systèmes de valeurs, notre vision ontologique, jusque même nos structures psychiques, en foulant aux pieds les vertus cardinales, telles « la générosité, la droiture, le respect des autres et de la parole donnée », qui sous-tendent l'organisation

traditionnelle (*Rihata*, p. 134). En outre, l'oligarchie dictatoriale dont la rutilance, l'engouement incoercible pour l'apparat, la débauche, les « plaisirs médiocres » et fugitifs, le déploiement de l'appareil de forces, les interminables discours ludiques et creux qui ne font que masquer les vrais problèmes, n'est aucunement animée par le souci de mettre sur pieds un programme cohérent visant à stimuler le plein épanouissement du corps social. Alors que l'Afrique s'enlise dans ses ornières et que le peuple égrène sa misère et s'efforce de survivre tant que faire se peut, les démagogues dilapident les fonds publics et se vautrent dans une extravagance dont la masse fait les frais. Un des malheurs de l'Afrique, ce continent où se confondent l'âge et l'intelligence, la parure et la valeur personnelle, la démocratie et l'autorité barbare ou féodale qui n'est plus de mise, les comptes individuels et les deniers publiques, n'est-ce pas parce que le destin de la majorité dépend des caprices d'un potentat, d'un monolithisme inepte, sans assises populaires, n'inspirant ni confiance ni respect, mais qui confisque les bastions du pouvoir politique et économique ?

Décidément, les romans de Maryse Condé, véritables constats politiques, vibrent des douleurs des masses désillusionnées, et partant, nous permettent de mesurer l'étendue du drame africain. Les masses laborieuses, terrorisées, paralysées, réduites à la mendicité ou vivant dans des conditions précaires, se réfugient dans le fatalisme : hier, avilies à outrance par l'institution colonialiste, leurs énergies épuisées par les exactions, et aujourd'hui, otages et victimes de régimes brutaux, frappées de plein fouet par la terreur policière, elles ne sont plus en mesure de donner leur meilleur

rendement. Ce qui explique, en partie, la stagnation économique.

On voit donc pourquoi les personnages militants, porte-parole du peuple, s'en prennent avec force aux dirigeants irresponsables qui mettent l'accent sur l'imitation servile, l'embourgeoisement, et la fanfaronnade, plutôt que sur la production et l'esprit de l'innovation. Emmurés dans leur vision réductrice, les gouvernants s'entourent de faste, au lieu d'œuvrer de toute urgence à réhabiliter la masse qui s'étiole ; fascinée par le flot des oripeaux venus du monde industrialisé, motivée par le souci qu'elle peut édifier des villes sophistiquées, n'étant toutefois éblouie que par le faux éclat de la façade, la caste dirigeante dont le goût est déterminé par le regard blanc, se livre à un mimétisme aberrant. *Imiter*.

Goût calqué sur le modèle européen, en effet, que celui qui consiste à se livrer à « une débauche de béton », en faisant construire, par des architectes et ingénieurs blancs, des immeubles mirobolants coûtant des sommes fabuleuses, « en oubliant toutefois les hôpitaux et les écoles », c'est-à-dire en oubliant de jeter les bases des infrastructures indispensables au développement horizontal et vertical (*Rihata*, p. 91). Il en résulte que nous bâtissons, « à coups d'efforts débilissants », « une Afrique (...) badigeonnée du vernis de l'Occident » (*Hérémakhonon*, p. 150 et 201). Soulignons-le, par-delà ces couches cosmétiques, aucun pays africain ne peut servir de modèle à un autre. Car tous vivent à crédit, tous semblent se faire étrangler par les puissantes griffes du Fonds Monétaire International (cf. *Rihata*, p. 214); tous semblent condamnés

au piétinement, car ne l'oublions pas, aucun n'a eu le bonheur de nourrir la masse: la pénurie des denrées alimentaires n'est-ce pas un fait, voire même une obsession quotidienne? Telle est la dimension de notre drame.

Drame que Maryse Condé met en évidence en dénonçant une politique qui consiste à bâtir des gratte-ciel tout reluisants d'exotisme, « éléphants blancs » qui cadrent faussement, scandaleusement avec le chômage généralisé, la disette endémique, en un mot, avec la médiocrité omniprésente, épaisse, noire, nue et cruellement tenace. Voilà l'envers du décor. Le Ministre Madou de *Rihata* ne fait-il pas miroiter devant les yeux de Sia, la fille aînée de Marie-Hélène, les séductions de la capitale africaine dotée de tous les scintillements ultra-modernes dont une patinoire? Fiction ou réalité? Une patinoire, ou du pain? Voilà le dilemme. Tel est le sort de l'Africain vivant sans eau courante, sans électricité, sans les nécessités les plus élémentaires de la vie à l'âge nucléaire et de l'informatique. Somme toute, le luxe des hommes au pouvoir, perçu comme « une insulte à la misère » du peuple, sonne creux (*Hérémakhonon*, p. 268). Une misère opaque et immobile, une gangrène : voilà, en définitive, la sordide réalité.

Face à l'aliénation d'une Afrique en pleine dérive, cherchant vainement sa voie, voguant à l'aveuglette, « sans cadran ni boussole, » Véronica se demande : « Et nous, quand serons-nous plus forts que les Chinois et les Blancs? » (*Hérémakhonon*, p. 79). La révélation du secret de la force et du mystère des Blancs (cf. *Le Pauvre Christ de Bomba*, p. 40), n'est certes pas dans les « vernis factices », le

développement sauvage et la prolifération de la surface. Le secret est ailleurs. Il faut le chercher dans la célébration de l'intelligence, dans la virilité et la probité intellectuelles, dans un appareil politique et judiciaire démocratique avec des garde-fous structurels qui préservent l'intérêt de la collectivité ; il faut le chercher dans l'éthique ou la moralité du travail, dans une disposition d'esprit favorisant la discipline, l'initiative créatrice, la réflexion qualitative, rigoureuse et positive ; il faut le chercher dans une lucidité de vision, l'abnégation de soi, le sentiment patriotique, le sens de la liberté, de la dignité, et de la dévotion... Or, les personnages politiques qui sont les cibles des assauts critiques de Maryse Condé, sont dénués de ces qualités primordiales : guindés, engoncés dans leurs univers de bulle de savon, ces bourreaux noirs se donnent l'illusion d'être aussi « civilisés », d'être aussi « forts » que les Blancs, car à l'instar des bourreaux coloniaux, ils exercent une autorité souveraine sur la masse en ayant recours à la machine d'intimidation inaugurée par le Pouvoir colonial ; maîtres absolus et incontestés, ils ne ménagent aucun effort pour semer la peur et le deuil autour d'eux ; ils violent et confisquent impunément les libertés individuelles et collectives.

On peut sans doute estimer que le fétichisme du pouvoir et l'ascendant qu'ils exercent dans leurs fiefs permettent à ces personnages incurablement cupides de donner le change, de jouer le jeu de l'être et du paraître. Que conclure? Sinon que derrière leurs masques de « Bâtisseurs », de « Guides Eclairés », de « Timoniers Suprêmes », de « Sauveurs » aux gestes larges, se dissimulent un vide congénital, un complexe

d'infériorité fort prononcé. Il faut croire que c'est de manière à combler cette lacune, ce vide intérieur qui le ronge secrètement, que Mwalimwana, le représentant illustre de « l'oligarchie avide qui a pris la relève de l'Europe », se fait conduire en mercedès, plutôt que de se promener en bicyclette comme les souverains du Danemark. « Les souverains du Danemark, nous explique Véronica, n'ont plus rien à prouver. Lui, Mwalimwana au contraire. Un berger devenu père de la nation doit s'entourer de faste » (*Hérémakhonon*, p. 64 et 65). Décidément, « toute société a les dieux qu'elle mérite » (*ibid.*, p. 34).

Toujours est-il que, dans le dessein de s'immortaliser, en d'autres termes, d'extérioriser leur sentiment de mégalomanie, les redoutables imposteurs-Présidents à vie, Mwalimwana et Toumany, « dressent des arcs de triomphe » et font édifier leurs propres statues « aux quatre coins » de leurs pays (*Rihata*, p. 91). Vive le triomphalisme illusoire ! N'est-ce pas dans le but de se donner un faux sentiment de poids et de force que ces soi-disant figures de proue consolident leur pouvoir envers et contre tout et réactualisent la terreur de l'univers colonial ? Au lieu de panser les plaies des masses « qui ne sont riches que de souffrances » ? (*Hérémakhonon*, p. 45). Au lieu de transformer le temps du mépris en aube chargée d'espérance ? Au lieu d'assumer l'Afrique humiliée, vulnérable, la sommer épanouie et heureuse, la défendre contre le pillage organisé, bref contre les assauts de l'Histoire ? Le reste n'est que jeu étrangement dérisoire.

Nul doute que ces leaders ostentatoires et parasitaires («la bourgeoisie paralytique qui se sucre», pour emprunter une expression à Lèye, le peintre-poète de *L'Harmattan* de Sembène) qui éclaboussent l'Afrique des giclées de leur arrogance, n'inspirent, aux personnages lucides de Maryse Condé, d'autres sentiments que l'indignation, le mépris, et à la limite, la haine. Cette « minorité privilégiée » (*Rihata*, p. 149) a beau jeu d'ignorer que le peuple est le détenteur des valeurs authentiquement africaines, que « notre histoire est jalonnée de suppliciés » (*Hérémakhonon*, p. 90), ou encore cette précieuse mise en garde d'Alioune Diop : à savoir que « Nous (Africains) sommes, dans le monde, un peuple fragile », un fait demeure : quelle que soit la puissance de la caste dirigeante, au bout du chemin, elle se rendra compte, inexorablement, comme le Ministre Madou de *Rihata*, comme Baré Koulé (c'est-à-dire barré coulé) du *Cercle des Tropiques*, ou encore comme Ahmadou Ahidjo, Jean-Bedel Bokassa, Idi Amin Dada, Marcias Nguema, Sékou Touré, etc., que leur carnaval burlesque n'est que trompe l'œil, mascarade, inanité ; en somme, que « personne n'est invincible » (*Rihata*, p. 189). Cela est d'une aveuglante certitude historique. Qu'on ne se y trompe pas. « *Même les civilisations meurent* ».

«Espoir Fait Vivre»: L'optimisme Revolutionnaire

Les « faux prophètes » dont Maryse Condé, par l'intermédiaire de ses personnages, pourfend les exactions, l'extravagance, les ambitions égoïstes, la gabegie, la supercherie, l'opportunisme, l'inconscience politique, le cynisme, la prévarication, l'incurie, la veulerie, la

désinvolture envers la grande misère de la masse... (les carences sont légion !), se livrent à des conduites outrancières qui dépassent les limites de l'entendement. Ils s'emparent du pouvoir à la faveur d'une fraude ou par la violence, et s'obstinent à se légitimer et à s'éterniser au pouvoir par la violence et la coercition institutionnalisées. En raison du climat de répression qu'ils font régner, le corps social revêt une apparence paisible, alors qu'en réalité, il gît sur un fond volatile.

Tout porte à croire que la rédemption ne viendra pas des intraitables « Guides Eclairés » dont les comportements échappent à la raison, puisqu'ils sont « prêts à tout pour garder le pouvoir » (*Hérémakhonon*, p. 87). Ni des « Timoniers » pour qui « la révolution, c'est d'abord affaire d'habits » (p. 110). Ni non plus, de leurs collaborateurs qui contribuent à trahir et à annuler l'espoir, puisqu'ils n'ont « jamais fait que de s'engraisser du sang du peuple » (p. 124). Le peuple à tout moment agressé, mystifié, bâillonné, léthargique, le peuple qui se laisse faire, qui ne dit mot, enfantera-t-il la Révolution dans le silence ? Un silence qui masque la résistance sourde, un silence devenu le refuge des démunis ? « Il prie, il mendie, il fait la queue aux coopératives, aux dispensaires (il faut ajouter : à la fontaine), il enterre ses enfants, il les baptise, le tout, en silence » (p. 138). Patience proverbiale. Un jour, il faudra bien rompre cette tradition du silence. Mais alors, qui assumera cette majorité silencieuse, inoffensive et sans défense ? Qui sera sa providence ? Quels sont les porteurs de l'aube houleuse et libératrice ? « Les crapauds-brousse » (entendons : Les intellectuels piégés, les

Prométhée enchaînés)? Les « têtes brûlées » ou les éléments radicaux? Qui déchiffrera les propos de l'Oracle ?

La répression engendre inéluctablement la résistance. Le schéma est bien connu. Le mouvement dialectique (ou la contradiction, au sens marxiste du terme) est une loi historique inhérente à toute société. Cet aspect du visage africain n'est pas délaissé par Maryse Condé dont l'héroïne pose une question fondamentale : devant le crépitement de la violence qui déferle sur le peuple, quelle est la meilleure attitude à adopter ? Faut-il se résigner « si l'ennemi est trop puissant, je veux dire si c'est lui qui possède les flics, les militaires, les camions, les canons et les hélicoptères ? » « Quand on se sait perdant d'avance », faut-il croire que « la lutte n'a pas de sens ? » La réponse à ces questions a la franchise, la spontanéité et aussi la naïveté d'un dessin d'enfant : « Saliou dit qu'il faut se battre quand même » (*Hérémakhonon*, p. 169-170). Par voie de conséquence, le messianisme des militants révolutionnaires tranche sur les exactions du régime « de chacals et d'hyènes » (*Rihata*, p. 95). Ainsi donc, Saliou, le « gêneur », l'agrégé d'histoire, l'incarnation d'une inflexible volonté de lutte, repousse le poste d'ambassadeur en Allemagne de l'Est, dans l'espoir de poursuivre sa somptueuse idée de mener un combat « subversif » destiné à sonner le glas de l'univers concentrationnaire édifié par Mwalimwana, Ibrahima Sory et leurs acolytes. Ce militant de gauche qui préfère vivre dans le dénuement plutôt que de pactiser avec les tortionnaires du peuple, défiera l'autorité de l'élite dirigeante.

A l'instar des membres du Club des Travailleurs du *Cercle des Tropiques*, Saliou, son étudiant (ou disciple) Birame III, le Dr. Yéhogul et leurs camarades anonymes, entreprennent, de façon souterraine, la mobilisation des consciences. Saliou, le directeur de l'Institut national, réussit à provoquer une irrépressible prise de conscience chez ses étudiants. A tel point que ces derniers, animés d'idéaux progressistes, oeuvrent en vue de l'effondrement de l'appareil policier monté par le régime totalitaire. C'est à cet effet que lors de la visite du président Mwalimwana, ils témoignent de leur indignation à l'égard du système oppressif en présentant

« Une pièce, œuvre collective de leur cru. Il y était question d'un pays dont le peuple gémissait sous la dictature. Le ministre du Développement agricole était surnommé l'Affameur des Campagnes. Celui de la Défense et de l'Intérieur, le Grand Assassin. Celui des Affaires étrangères, le mendiant en Aide étrangère et le Mwalimwana lui-même, le Grand Exploiteur. » (Hérémakhonon, p. 77).

A la suite de cette représentation, les douze étudiants responsables des différentes sections (on songe aux douze disciples de Jésus), dont Birame III, sont arrêtés et incarcérés. Et c'est alors que commence la confrontation ouverte entre les forces de la répression et celle de la résistance. Le régime réactionnaire s'applique avec rigueur à désamorcer le sursaut de révolte; les foudres des étudiants sont vite réprimées. Ainsi, la volonté de réhabiliter le peuple se heurte violemment à l'effroyable machine de mort. Saliou est révoqué de ses fonctions ; et les douze étudiants, après avoir subi des épreuves initiatiques, c'est-à-dire après avoir été

réduits au travail forcé et à l'humiliation, sont sommés de prêter, publiquement, serment d'allégeance « à la Révolution » (il faut plutôt lire : « à la contre-révolution »), organisée par Mwalimwana. Apparemment neutralisés, leur ardeur combative attiédie, tous les étudiants, hormis Birame III, sont contraints à prêter le serment. Quant à ce dernier, il prend le micro dans sa main et, indompté, comme soudain transfiguré, il s'insurge en hurlant sa revendication: « Jamais, jamais. Ils trahissent la révolution. Jamais, jamais... » (p.91).

Geste de refus merveilleusement exemplaire. En dépit des contraintes, Birame III, cet enfant fier, têtu et impitoyable, ne trahit pas la cause dont son maître Saliou est l'apôtre. Il ne biaise pas. (Il fait penser, en quelque sorte, à Saint Pierre qui dit au Messie : « Même si tous sont scandalisés, du moins pas moi »). Comme Galilée, Birame III est habité d'une vaillance fabuleuse, d'une fermeté de caractère exceptionnelle, d'une lucidité étonnante. Esprit frondeur, il fait figure de visionnaire robuste; irruption de négation irradiante, rien ne brise son irréductible volonté de combat : Ni chantages, ni tortures n'ont raison de sa foi révolutionnaire. Porteur d'une parole messianique, revêtu d'une dimension mythique, cet enfant rebelle, téméraire, mais infiniment vulnérable, est le symbole même de la Promesse, de l'espérance, de la résistance opiniâtre à la chosification, bref, le symbole de toute une jeune génération sacrifiée (le massacre des enfants est un spectacle étrangement familier en Afrique). La prodigieuse hardiesse de Birame III donne à voir que c'est au prix de sacrifices et grâce à l'acharnement au combat positif que l'Afrique réalisera le défi d'accéder à la liberté.

Est-il surprenant alors, que par-delà le tombeau Birame III se voit miraculeusement promu au statut de héraut légendaire au même titre que Manuel des *Gouverneurs de la Rosée* (J. Roumain) et Oumar Faye de *O Pays, mon beau peuple !* (Sembène) ? Pour ainsi dire, la mort sacralise son héroïsme. On sait que même après son lâche assassinat, son invincible optimisme militant ne cesse d'animer ses camarades qui scandent « en sourdine » un chant qu'ils ont composé en l'honneur du « Martyre de la Révolution Africaine » :

« Il avait encore le goût du lait

Dans sa bouche

Mais il a su crier Non

Non aux soldats

Non au tyran » (Hérémakhonon, 114)

Animés de cet esprit révolutionnaire, les étudiants durcissent, peu à peu, leur « résistance passive » en faisant circuler, sous le manteau, des tracts incendiaires (p. 134). Leurs efforts concertés culminent à la manifestation épique à laquelle la masse, ayant jeté pour un instant le masque de passivité, participe. Mais comme il fallait s'y attendre, la partie semble perdue d'avance: la manifestation se solde par un bilan tragique. Les tyrans brisent, dans le sang, la résistance populaire; la population est muselée, réprimée à loisir.

Les contre-révolutionnaires ont beau jeu de pousser la répression jusqu'au vertige. Rien n'effratera l'optimisme des militants de poids; rien ne les rebutera ; rien ne désamorcera le processus révolutionnaire. Car un projet habite les héros positifs qui assument le rôle de redresseurs de torts : infléchir

le destin et transformer leur défaite provisoire en Révolution victorieuse. Voilà pourquoi ils ne se laisseront pas abattre par les rites initiatiques, ni par le débordement de violence. Ainsi, à peine remis de leur échec, les anarchisants-progressistes et porteurs de l'aube, poussent-ils leur impétuosité jusqu'au bout, en mettant le feu aux Permanences du Parti et en tentant « d'envahir la Maison de la Radio » (p. 268-269).

Suite à ces soulèvements politiques et à la ténébreuse histoire d'attentat et de mercenaires imaginaires, nous assistons à une recrudescence de violence. Un état de siège est décrété. Saliou, le maître à penser de Birame III, est accusé de menées subversives et, partant, comme des milliers d'autres, il est arrêté, brutalisé, et amené au camp infâme qu'on nomme Samiana, où il est livré à la torture. En dépit des dures épreuves subies, le dissident demeure récalcitrant ; rien ne le désarme. Par conséquent, les gardes-chiourme l'assassinent tout en prétendant qu'il s'est suicidé. Le tour est joué. Jeu de masques on ne peut plus cruel. Ce meurtre est le coup de grâce pour Véronica qui se veut une observatrice neutre et objective (Ce souci d'objectivité explique pourquoi la narratrice adopte une multiplicité de points de vue : elle va tantôt au camp des révolutionnaires progressistes, tantôt à celui de leurs opposants. Soit dit en passant, *Hérémakhonon*, au rythme heurté, au style volontiers alerte, désinvolte, ironique, satirique, imprégné d'humour parodique et corrosif, trempé d'une amertume contenue, et admirable de simplicité, est, à coup sûr, un chef d'œuvre, car la narratrice mène son récit avec un bonheur remarquable). Elle se rend compte, dès lors, que le régime de Mwalimwana s'édifie sur des hécatombes en liquidant « les gêneurs » à qui l'on tient grief

de se constituer en un parti d'opposition interdit. Les écailles tombent de ses yeux et elle fait une remarque désabusée, à savoir : que les dirigeants se vengent « de haines personnelles. De rivalités et d'ambitions déçues » (p. 285).

La double mort de Saliou et de Birame III, tous deux symboles de forces régénératrices, de ténacité et d'une indomptable grandeur morale, semble diluer et résorber le sursaut d'espoir possible ; du même coup, cette mort donne à voir toute l'étendue du tragique quotidien réservé aux Africains lucides qui osent dire que « deux et deux font quatre ». Vu la cruauté des détenteurs du pouvoir, il n'y a apparemment aucun moyen légitime de faire valoir ses droits. Etant donné que l'élan révolutionnaire s'amorce et avorte aussitôt après, le bonheur et l'espoir apparaissent comme un leurre. En raison de cette atmosphère désespérante, on est en droit de conclure que *Hérémakhonon*, au même titre que *A Man of the People*, *Le Cercle des Tropiques*, *Le Récit du Cirque*, *Un Fusil dans la main* et *Perpétue*, est le récit de l'impossible espoir.

On conviendra, en dernière analyse, que la résistance clandestine éparse ne semble pas en mesure de fournir la poussée nécessaire qui précipitera l'écroulement de l'édifice démagogique de Mwalimwana. Il faudrait alors, une meilleure mobilisation de la masse, une organisation plus concertée pour féconder le combat révolutionnaire progressiste et lui conférer l'envergure et le dynamisme qui le porteront à l'épiphanie.

Il est manifeste que la résistance s'amplifie d'un roman à l'autre. L'esprit militant semé par Saliou, Birame III, Yéhogul et leurs camarades de lutte, continue de germer et de fleurir dans *Une Saison à Rihata*. En effet, on trouve dans les deux romans, un schéma analogue: La lutte révolutionnaire couve et les forces rédemptrices se dressent contre les forces maléfiques. Tant au niveau de l'articulation de ce combat quasi-manichéen, qu'à celui de la structure des militants, les deux œuvres entretiennent des rapports symétriques: Mwalimwana se prolonge dans Toumany: ces deux Présidents à vie sont irrigués par la même violence aveugle. Dans les deux œuvres, les établissements scolaires se transforment littéralement en foyers insurrectionnels; étudiants, enseignants et médecins jouent un rôle déterminant dans la galvanisation de la conscience politique.

Au reste, il y a du Saliou chez l'instituteur Faladé; rien d'étonnant, alors, si ces deux réfractaires connaissent un sort identique. En outre, les Docteurs Faïk et Yéhogul qui partagent les traits du Dr. Malekê du *Cercle de Tropiques* ou du Dr. Nkoua d'*un Fusil dans la main...*, sont de la même trempe. L'idéologie marxiste féconde tous ces catalyseurs révolutionnaires.

De plus, le griot Sory (à ne pas confondre avec le brutal Ibrahima Sory de *Hérémakhonon*) qui se fait la voix du peuple opprimé, rejoint Birame III de par sa dénonciation ouverte du « régime sanguinaire » (*Rihata*, p. 114). Aussi se fait-il irrémédiablement condamner pour avoir donné libre cours à sa révolte dans son « chant de colère » que voici:

« Ah, les nouveaux hommes à Mercédès
Avec leurs villas et leurs virements
En Suisse
Ils ne valent pas, ils ne valent pas
Ceux que nos pères ont été...
(*ibid.* p. 136)

Si tous ces opposants du régime réactionnaire combattent malgré la violence exacerbée, c'est qu'ils nourrissent l'espoir qu'un jour, «l'arbre de la justice de du bonheur » sera planté dans leur pays (p. 104).

Il n'est pas indifférent de souligner qu'à l'opposé de *Hérémakhonon*, *Une Saison à Rihata* nous présente quelques personnages féminins dynamiques. L'apport de Muti, Teresa, Eliza, la femme de Faladé (contrepoints de Oumou Hawa, la femme de Saliou, et Ramatoulaye, l'épouse d'Ibrahima Sory), confère une dimension nouvelle au combat de libération.

Qui plus est, dans *Une Saison à Rihata* les révolutionnaires semblent coordonner «plus efficacement la lutte armée (p. 97). La guérilla du Nord en fait foi. Le combat armé atteint une ampleur insoupçonnée lorsque Victor, un guérillero du Nord, assassine le Ministre Madou, le «fils spirituel» de Toumany (p. 213), incarnation de l'arrogance et de l'arbitraire du «pouvoir haï» (p. 151). Oui, les porteurs de l'aube sont aussi porteurs de feu! Cette offensive audacieuse marque un tournant décisif dans l'articulation du combat; aussi est-elle symbolique à plus d'un titre. Bien que la « mission solitaire » que s'est fixée Victor risque d'entraîner de lourdes conséquences, le geste paraît symboliquement

exemplaire, en ce sens qu'il prouve, de façon éblouissante, que « personne n'est invincible » ; du même coup, il sert à affermir l'espoir révolutionnaire. Comment mieux conclure, sinon qu'en citant les mots du Dr. Faïk qui voit dans ce geste, le prélude d'une aube phosphorescente d'espoir? «Il se passe beaucoup de choses dans le pays, Eliza. En dépit des apparences, les jours de Toumany sont comptés...» (p. 205). Historiquement, Toumany et ses semblables sont bel et bien condamnés. Néanmoins, il faut prévoir un combat de longue haleine ; donc, il faut intensifier la lutte armée.

Un «bal de caïmans», un panier de crabes : telle est l'image de l'Afrique qui nous provient à travers l'écran des personnages de Maryse Condé. Ses héroïnes découvrent leur continent d'origine avec son visage tourmenté et traduisant toutes les formes d'une violence et d'une dissipation d'énergie dont les effets sont délétères au développement social : amertumes, luttes sourdes, dissensions religieuses, antagonisme tribal, rivalités malsaines, méfiance mutuelle, manœuvres dilatoires, trahison, guerres fratricides, guérillas, etc. Une véritable «plongée en plein tourbillon» (*Rihata*, p. 170). Certes, «l'âge d'or n'est pas pour demain»; «attends le bonheur», semble dire Maryse Condé. Aussi l'imaginaire des deux héroïnes – Véronica et Marie-Hélène, aboutit-il à un mouvement de désenchantement, pour ne pas dire : de répulsion à l'égard de l'Afrique-Mère. Et pour cause!

Mais ces images que nous recevons d'une Afrique étranglée, dépoétisée, en proie au désarroi, sont-elles éculées, c'est-à-dire déformées par le prisme des personnages interposés ?

Bien sûr que non, répétons-le, un rapide survol du corpus romanesque africain permet de conclure que notre romancière aborde les thèmes dont les idées-forces animent notre « littérature en ébullition ». Les spectacles des villages entiers brûlés, « des milliers d'hommes (...) traqués, décimés (...) des représailles terribles » (*Rihata*, p. 96), scènes hallucinantes de violence et familières au lecteur du roman de l'ère coloniale, évoquent les sinistres tableaux que dressent Elechi Amadi, Mongo Beti, Ikechukwu Emeka, Alioum Fantouré, Guy Menga, Wole Soyinka...

Dans la même perspective, il importe de noter que l'Afrique et les Antilles vivent une expérience commune de violence et de brutalités ; on sait que Toumany a passé « un séjour privé en Haïti dont le dictateur était un de ses amis personnels » (*Rihata*, p. 212). Qui se ressemblent se rassemblent. Il revient à l'auteur d'*Une Saison à Rihata* de poser cette question déchirante: « Pourquoi, par-delà les océans, cet identique ballet de l'oppression ? » (p. 154).

Il ressort de ce qu'on a attesté, que *Hérémakhonon* et *Une Saison à Rihata* nous sensibilisent non seulement à la problématique africaine, mais aussi à la déchirure antillaise. Désarmées devant un monde qui ne leur appartient pas, rongées par un malaise viscéral, les héroïnes apatrides de Maryse Condé, ni tout à fait des « bâtardes », ni tout à fait des « étrangères », cherchent en terre africaine, une thérapeutique à un mal intangible, indicible, un étanchement de leur soif d'absolu. Femmes à la dérive (comme la race, du reste), éternelles exilées, « voyageuses paumées », se sentant mal dans leur peau de déracinées, elles ne réussissent pas à se

réconcilier avec elles-mêmes ; à plus forte raison : impossible dialogue ou communion avec l'Afrique en mutation, cette Afrique-là où les écarts sont érigés en (et servent de) normes. Rejetées par l'Afrique-Mère, à l'égard de laquelle elles se sentent décalées, dépayées, elles la repoussent à leur tour, après une vaine tentative de réconciliation et d'intégration.

Le drame des héroïnes de Maryse Condé est le drame du refus, le drame d'un être empêtré dans un univers étouffant. Etre perpétuellement en fuite, l'héroïne fuit le présent, aussi bien que la réalité de son passé. Ainsi en est-il de Marie-Hélène; c'est singulièrement le cas de Véronica. Au cours de son bref séjour en Afrique, les yeux de cette jeune femme se dessillent; une à une, ses illusions s'en sont allées. Devant la violence de la réalité africaine, elle constate amèrement qu'elle s'est trompée d'« aïeux », que ses « aïeux » africains se révèlent comme des « tortionnaires » impénitents. En désespoir de cause, elle prend la fuite en secouant, sur le pays en convulsion, «la poussière de (ses) sandales» (*Hérémakhonon*, p. 291), afin de renaître avec le printemps qui se déploie sur Paris. Eternel retour nietzschéen. Au demeurant, sa quête inquiète et confuse trouve ses échos dans « l'aventure ambiguë » africaine.

Quant à Marie-Hélène, la fuite physique lui semble interdite : Mariée à Zek, un Africain qui ne cherche pas à se revaloriser, et dont la bonté, la générosité et la médiocrité sont symboliques du continent noir, elle est condamnée à vivre en Afrique. Du reste, elle n'éprouve aucune tendresse pour son mari, aucune affection pour l'Afrique non plus. On voit donc

que l'image du mari et la représentation de l'Afrique tendent à se confondre.

Les deux héroïnes se sentent donc trahies par le spectacle d'une Afrique grotesque; leurs rêves s'estompent. Fuyant l'Afrique, (physiquement ou mentalement) elles se trouvent à se fuir, à traîner partout, avec elles, leur cortège de paradoxes et de contradictions, leurs poids de douleurs, d'humiliations et de déchirures. A la fois symboles des Antilles écartelées, et incarnations du déchirement qui s'empare de l'Africain avisé, suppliciées dans la mouvance de l'histoire africaine, une histoire jalonnée de souffrances, elles sont sollicitées par le suicide : Mourir afin de refleurir dans « le vert paradis » de l'Eden. Faute de redevenir des fœtus, elles cherchent à se régénérer en faisant « le retour au temps d'avant l'enfance, d'avant la création du monde, d'avant les désirs et le péché » (*Rihata*, p. 178). Somme toute, le paysage intérieur chez nos deux héroïnes inconsolables, viscéralement piégées, recèle les résonances de la nausée, du divorce, du dépaysement, du déséquilibre psychique, pour ne pas dire : de la névrose.

On s'en doute, *Hérémakhonon* et *Une Saison à Rihata* inquiètent et provoquent le malaise. C'est qu'au cœur de ces deux romans se fait jour une interrogation angoissante sur le destin des Noirs, ces sinistrés de l'Histoire, ces mutilés qui n'ont pas su assumer, s'approprier leur histoire. Si nous sommes toujours vulnérables, semble dire Véronica, c'est que nous n'avons pas encore de prise sur le poids de la réalité, une réalité qu'il faut apprivoiser en réalisant le défi suprême de transfigurer les humiliations millénaires en viatique du Royaume du salut collectif.

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8. The Leopard across the Seas: The Calabar Civilization in Cuba

Fr. Louis J. Munoz

The Academic Community – the true *universitas* – is a community made up of those who have died and those still alive. Our predecessors still live in their works. Those who are alive honour them also with their work. Hence the tradition of the Festschriften to recall the memory of those colleagues.

The task of the contributor to a book of Essays is not that of a praise-singer. One could say rather that it is a silent homage: an essay, a piece of work, which one feels our colleague would have enjoyed. There is no secret about the love that Professor Feuser – Wilf for his friends – had for Africa where he spent most of his life. Less known perhaps is his fascination for the African civilizations in the Americas. One of his last books was precisely the edition and translation of a Yoruba divination work from Brazil. I share with Wilf his love for Africa, where I have spent most of my life, as well as the interest and love for the Africans in the New Continent. He was primarily concerned with Brazil; for reasons of affinity and language. I have been more interested in Cuba.

Cuba has been called the island of the black fidelity. There, African traditions – Yoruba, Fon and Congo – have remained faithful to their ancestors and African civilizations, although at times in a fragmentary and simplified form, have continued

to be alive. The culture, the religion and the language of Spaniards and Creoles may have affected the Africans but they have also affected the culture, language and religion of Cuba. One may recall that in Spanish, for instance, twins are called '*melizos*' from the Yoruba word '*meji*' two.

I have selected among the African traditions in Cuba the Cross River or Calabar civilization, for which Cuba is absolutely unique in the New Continent. When I speak of the Cross River civilization, I refer to the crystallized culture of the peoples around the Cross River Basin, primarily the Efik, Ibibio, Ejagham, Efut and Qua. I should also add that by civilization I understand culture writ large, namely, the total product of creativity through time of a given people, what Braudel terms a "cultural area". It embraces artistic, religious, linguistic and intellectual elements and embodies itself in moral codes, customs and institutions. It also offers a consistent conception of the world. It is in this sense that I speak of a Cross River civilization.

I will study particularly the Abakuá Society, found exclusively in the seaports of Havana, Regla, Matanzas, etc. where its members are also known as *Ñáñigos*. Thomas calls it "the most distinct and original cult of reminiscence of Africa in Cuba, which unlike the Santería is not found anywhere but in Cuba. Abakuá is the name of the society. *Ñáñigos* is the popular name of its adepts." (Thomas 1971, p. 160).

The secrecy proper to the Ekpe society helped in the transmission of fundamental cultural traits. The Efik language

became the Abakuá, a pidgnized Efik, as it has been described, but also with additions from other African languages present in Cuba, Lucumi and Congo primarily.

The art of the Cross River civilization passed also across the Ocean and manifested itself in the sacred objects of the Ekpe-Abakuá societies: drums, bells, decorations and especially the costumes of the masked dancers, *Ireme*, who perform in the ceremonies of the cult in a beautiful display. Lydia Cabrera remarked that, had Diaghilev been born in Cuba, he would have used them for his famous ballets.

The secret writing of the Abakuá sect, the Nsibidi of Ejagbam origin, exclusive of its high priests, was also transmitted to Cuba. There, known as *Anaforuana*, it has developed beautiful calligraphic masterpieces that have helped to crystallize the Cross River traditions.

The Ekpe Society had also played in Africa a political and social role, crucial in communities divided into small groups – the well-known ‘towns’ of Calabar. It is therefore important to look at the social and political roles fulfilled by the Abakuá ‘*tierras*’, ‘*plantes*’ or ‘*potencias*’, as the individual societies are known in Cuba. It is very suggestive that some *obonekues* describe their lodges precisely as “small-size states,” “*estados en chiquito*.” (Cabrera 1975 a, p. 201).

In other words, the Abakuá society in Cuba is a unique mechanism of tradition that has made possible the transmission and continuity of an old African civilization through the vicissitudes of the slave trade, the uprooting of

populations and the difficulties of integration in an alien society.

Fernando Ortiz, the great Cuban anthropologist, once remarked that in a lifetime of study he failed to discover the precise meaning of this society. In spite of the monumental research of Lydia Cabrera and the insights of Robert F. Thompson, it remains still rather unknown. The mystery is compounded by the fact that Abakuá is nothing else but the transposition in Cuba of the mysterious Ekpe Society of the Efiks, still very much alive in the present day and whose ritual is wrapped in secret.

No wonder Roger Bastide was able to write, "the best way for an ethnologist, who want to study the Calabar civilization, is to go to Cuba and be initiated first in a society of Ñañigos. Showing that he knows, he would be received by his black brothers of Africa and would be able to do his research on a solid basis." I have had that experience, when showing to an Efik colleague one of the Anaforuana sent to me by Diaz Favelo, the late Cuban anthropologist. He told me, alarmed, that it was very secret and not supposed to be known.

For somebody whose intellectual search has been very much centered on the process of tradition, the study of the Abakuá society in Cuba is particularly rewarding, as it shows precisely those qualities that characterize a true tradition: continuity, fidelity to one's origins, affinity and adaption. All these make traditions go on and live, changing but also enduring. The Ekpe society and, for that matter, the civilization of the Cross River, has shown itself to be

particularly successful in the political, artistic and cultural adaptation to the needs of the time while remaining true to its original identity.

The Cross River Cultural Region

The geographical area of the Benue-Cross valley, as Alagoa suggests, may have been a cultural watershed in the history of Africa. Its languages form a bridge between the languages of the Guinea coast and the Bantu to the East. And it was also on the basis of this linguistic evidence that the Middle Benue region has been suggested as the area in which the Bantu languages originated. (Alagoa 1980, p. 56).

The Cross-River basin, where many peoples have come together, has been for centuries an area of cultural interaction. In spite of their linguistic and ethnic diversity, all the groups who came to the region – only the Ibibio do not have a history of migration – have borrowed from one another and produced what could be rightly described as the Cross River or Calabar civilization. This is perhaps what Ruel had in mind when he wrote about the '*Ekpe polity*,' because the *Ekpe* (or *Ngbe*, *Nyamkpe* or '*Egbo*') society, adopted by all these groups, became a unifying factor (Ruel 1973, p. 250). But, since all of them remained autonomous and kept their cultural specificity, it is perhaps more appropriate to speak of a common civilization, as I said above.

The peoples who inhabit the region arrived at different times but, by the end of the 16th century, the main pattern of settlement was fairly well-established.

The Igbo live at the North and North East. Among them, the Aro are a sub-tribe of specialist traders whose activities spread throughout the area and beyond, due to their fame as the owners of the Long Juju of Arochukwu, an oracle spirit.

The Ibibio, who, as I said, have no tradition of migration, live to the West and South West of the River. They are primarily farmers, although some like the Uruan are specialist fishermen. A dispersal movement took place from this area in the late 16th century. Some groups, who moved north, formed the Enyong tribe and others, like the Effiat and the Efik, moved southwards to establish fishing communities in the lower Cross-River.

To the East of the river, the population is rather sparse. In the North live the Ekoi – the Ejagham being its main group – as well as other smaller tribes, like the Umon and Akunakuna. Further south are the Ododop and the Okoyong peoples who have migrated from the Cameroons. Still further are the Qua, a branch of the Ejagham or Ekoi group. And finally, by the estuary, are found the Efut, a Bantu group that migrated from the Cameroons.

The unity of the Cross River basin in geographical terms is matched by affinities in the cultural patterns of its peoples induced by their mutual contacts. The area is characterized by the existence of communities organized in segmentary political systems, deriving their social controls from various forms of societies or associations and age grade organizations. (Alagoa 1980, p. 51).

This cultural area and the neighbouring Niger Delta have also produced something entirely new in West Africa, akin to the trading cities of the Phoenicians and the maritime republics of Venice and Genoa. Such were the Canoe Houses of the Ijo and the Efik Towns of Old Calabar. One may describe them with Davidson as “Cooperative trading corporations governed by men of strong political authority who relied on an adaptation of traditional sanctions for their own law and order and the needs of their commerce.” (Davidson 1974, p. 198).

In fact, the Efik, in spite of being numerically small, became the leading tribe of the Cross River region. The four main towns of Old Calabar developed a political and commercial system of great resilience and originality where, in earlier times, only small groups of fishermen had lived. Thus, the Efik were able to achieve the monopoly of trade with the Europeans, with whom they first traded slaves and, later on, oil. Their early contact with the Europeans thus gave them an edge over the peoples of the interior. Their name, Efik, is derived from the verb-root ‘*fik*’ meaning to oppress. They were called thus because they prevented other Cross River tribes from establishing direct relations with the European traders. (Simmons 1956, p. 11). It was also there, at Duke Town, that the first missionaries of the Presbyterian Church landed in 1846 and, as a result, Efik language was put in writing before any other.

Originally, the Efik lived at Uruan in Ibibioland and fished at the Cross River estuary. Late in the 16th century, they left after some dispute and settled finally at Ekot Etunko, now known as Creek Town. Other groups went up river and

settled there, being known as the Enyong. Tradition holds that there were five founding fathers that settled at Creek Town with their wives and families. Not long after, two of the groups left and established themselves at Obutong, now Old Town. Soon after, other groups followed and new settlements were established, namely, Duke Town or Atakpa and Henshaw Town or Nsidung. Some other smaller villages grew along the river, like Mbiabo, Ikoroffiong and Ikoneto, but as Hart stated in his report, Creek Town was the focus from which the waves of early migrations radiated. Eventually, it was eclipsed by Duke Town, which grew wealthy and influential through European trade. (Hart 1964, par. 120).

When the Efik arrived in Old Calabar, their social organization was like that of the Ibibio among whom they have lived so long. There were basic family cells, made up of a man, his wives and children. Several of these cells, related through their menfolk, made up a compound group known as *ufok*, a 'house'. And several compound groups, descending from a common ancestor, made up a lineage group.

The original village settlement at Creek Town was made up of two lineage groups bound together by their common tutelary deity, Ndem Efik, a secret society and a council. In other words, the structure of Efik society was based upon kinship, which determined a man's membership in family, house and lineage. (Latham 1973, p. 31).

The slave trade, however, introduced a new element to Efik society. Domestic slavery, although known before, as shown

by Antera Duke's diaries, increased very much as more hands were required to man the canoes, join the raiding groups and to trade in the slave markets. But the slaves remained as outsiders and when their numbers grew, their masters, who traced their descent to one of the two Efik ancestors, became a ruling elite of freemen.

Yet, slaves were expected to support and identify with the interests of their masters, for whom they worked and fought if necessary. This gave them the opportunity to achieve wealth and influence. Those brought up in Calabar were specially favoured and became fully integrated in the society. The most outstanding case being that of Eyo Nsa who became a great warrior and was rewarded by the Ambo with a wife and therefore granted freedom as he received kinship by marriage. He became extremely wealthy and by buying slaves for business and prestige, built up a large household of retainers, which established itself as a new lineage group. (Aye 1967, pp. 44-45).

But Eyo Nsa was not alone in creating a new segment in Efik society. As I have said before, the two original lineage groups at the time of the settlement subdivided into six separate segments, which Jones has called 'wards.' (Jones 1956, p. 122). Together with the Eyo, there were now seven wards, which retained the Ibibio name for a compound group, *ufok* or 'house'. (Latham 1973, p. 33). Each of the wards was governed in the same way as the lineage they superseded. Ultimately, a head and a council of elders ruled each ward, just as the old lineages. One can thus understand Waddell's statement about Old Calabar being made up of "a number of

small republics, each with its own chief and council,” almost literally repeated by Hart in his Commission Report, where he speaks of “a conglomeration of loosely knit tiny republics.” (Hart 1964, par. 129).

As I said before, the common tutelary deity, the secret society and the council had united the original village, with its two lineage segments. This continued to be the case with the enlarged towns with their seven wards. The cult continued of Ndem Efik, a water deity appropriate to the traditional occupation of the Efik, fishing. However, as they became mostly traders, it soon lost much of its influence although is still in existence.

A new cult then grew up which helped to bind together the new wards. Waddell specifically states: “The towns of Calabar are in fact a number of small republics, each with its own chief and council, united only by the Egbo confraternity.” (Hart 1964, par. 189). This was the Ekpe cult, associated with a secret society. This new society replaced a former one called *Nyana Yaku* or *Mkpe* (the *Ngbe* of the Ejagham) that had fulfilled a similar role at the beginning. And, as we will see, Ekpe became eventually an integrating factor in the cultural area of the Cross River Basin.

The Ekpe Society in the Cross River Region

The Ekpe Society, or *Egbo*, as the Europeans knew it, appears in the records as far as the late 18th century, including the diaries of Antera Duke. But it seems that it was introduced in Calabar much earlier. The Ekpe Society of Old

Calabar, according to Jones, was derived from the neighbouring Qua who said they brought it from their Ekoi homeland. (Jones 1956, p. 136).

It seems in fact to have originated from the Ejagham, where it is known as the *Ngbe* (the Ejagham name for leopard). Among them, when a town decides to migrate, the first thing done, even before the land is divided up, is to fix the position of the *Ekpe* house. A small shed, called *Ekpa Etan* (the house without windows), is then erected to mark the spot where is going to stand. (Talbot 1912, p. 39).

In his description of the land of the Ekoi, Talbot remarks, “the whole country is honeycombed with secret societies among which the Egbo club is the most powerful.” He then gives the genesis and development of the society. “The Ekoi claim to have originated the whole idea of such clubs... Later on, the Ododop and other tribes near Iffiang, Akwa and Efut in South Cameroons, started a similar society. The Efiks of Calabar were not slow to perceive the advantage of such institutions and so founded the Ekpe club (sic) which, with the growing importance of their town, through the coming of white men, soon became the wealthiest of all Egbo societies.” (Talbot 1912, p. 37).

Accounts of the origin of *Ngbe* or *Ekpe* all indicate its spread from people of one culture to another and the fact that by this process of adaptation and use it gained in importance. In origin, the association is almost certainly Ejagham, but it appears to have spread to certain of the more clearly Bantu south-eastern neighbours of the Ejagham before being

adopted by the Efik of Calabar and from them returned to the Ejagham of the hinterland. (Ruel 1973, p. 250). The Efiks, because of their monopoly of the Calabar trade, influenced the Ekoi living south of Oban to adopt many of their customs and laws.

The Efut, on their own part, adapted, propagated and formulated with a great wealth of invention the art and culture of the Ejagham. It was in fact an Efut from Usaha-Edet, an agglomeration of three Efut villages, by the borders of the northern rivers, which sold the secrets of *Ngbe* to the Efik of Calabar, towards 1750 (Latham 1973, p. 36). In fact, towards 1877-78 the Efut lodges of the Leopard Society were still the most prestigious and expensive. (Thompson 1985, p. 239).

The adoption of *Ekpe* by the Efik of Calabar had a considerable significance. Firstly, because in the 18th and 19th centuries, Calabar was one of the major centers of West African trade and gained considerably in prestige from its success among the wealthy trading chiefs and lineage heads. Secondly, because the trade routes which the Efik controlled became the avenues for further dispersal of the association.

In an area of small autonomous communities lacking any general authority, *Ekpe* became one of the means by which traders' rights were safeguarded and the passage of persons between communities protected. Indeed, *Ekpe* as an instrument of authority and guarantee of protection would appear to have become one of the major 'exports' of Calabar

to those hinterland peoples who supplied them in turn with slaves, ivory and oil. (Ruel 1973, p. 250).

Waddell, for instance, describes a 'grand and rare Egbo ceremonial' on the occasion of the purchase of a lodge: "Some persons of consequence had come from a far country to purchase the honours and authority of that institution, that they might introduce it among their own people, and become the founders of a new branch. This was the equivalent to entering the confederation of which Calabar was the head and they were consequently treated with distinguished respect." (Waddell 1863, p. 265).

The Efik adopted the *Ngbe* and baptized it in their language as *Ekpe*, the leopard. They found in *Ekpe* a source of moral restraint, a supreme mysterious authority growling "like the insides of a guilty man" behind a curtain of the *Ngbe* hall. In the name of that voice, laws were promulgated or annulled, debtors constraint to pay and European arrogance defied. (Thompson 1985, p. 241).

The effective government of society became that of the *Ekpe*, the Leopard Society. Men of substance were organized at several levels of authority, commanding the obedience of men of lesser substance to the point where *Ekpe* could administer laws and apply punishments, settle disputes, organize business agreements and act as an effective civil power. Reflecting its great concern with trade, *Ekpe* was not an aristocratic ancestral organization but one whose several grades of membership could be entered by meeting a fixed scale of payment. Its hierarchy of authority, like that of other

political-religious associations in Africa was thus achieved, as Davidson remarks, by means closer to those of the City of London than of the House of Lords. (Davidson 1974, p. 201).

The Efiks of the old Calabar towns relied for their own law and order and the needs of their commerce on the adaptation of traditional sanctions. A new source of authority and moral knowledge thus entered in the world of Calabar at the moment when the region was boiling following the success of the slave trade, at the end of the 18th century. The *Ekpe* society spread throughout the southern areas of the Cross River, notably because of the influence, power and prestige of Calabar. And the Efut of Usaha-Edet, the link with everything that was beautiful and morally imposing in the Ngbe society, were the teachers of Calabar.

Usaha-Edet, called Usagaré in the Abakuá language, has become in Cuba a mythical sacred city, as they believe that it was there that the divine secrets were revealed. By establishing the continuity with its origins, one could say that the Leopard (*Ekpe*) had crossed the sea.

The Carabali in Cuba

In the first decades of the 19th century many peoples of the Cross River region were forcefully brought to Cuba. Cabrera gives an impressive list, though many tribes are not identifiable. She mentions the abayas, eluyos, okankua (Akunakuna), isiekes, efis (Efiks), appapas, bibis (Ibibios), brinches and bricamos. Although they belonged to many tribes, all of them were known by the generic term of

Carabalis. Something similar to the term Lucumi, which embraced different Yoruba groups, Nupe and others.

There is in fact evidence that people from the Calabar Region were brought to Cuba as early as the 16th century. Latham provides evidence about Calabar being involved in the slave trade with America in the second half of the 17th century. He quotes Curtin's estimates for the whole area of the Oil Rivers – which also include Bonny and New Calabar – and gives a total of 823, 700 between 1711 and 1810. A reasonable guess of the total export of slaves from Calabar in the years of the slave trade would be of 250,000 at most (Latham 1973, p. 23).

Yet, it is only at the end of the 18th and beginning of the 19th century that they were brought in great numbers, due to the development of the sugar cane plantations, following the collapse of the sugar industry in Saint-Domingue or Haiti. When Britain made the slave trade illegal in 1808, trade continued unabated at Old Calabar. Jameson cited by Latham, states that 162 cargoes of slaves left Old Calabar between October of 1820 and July of 1821.

The vacuum created by the absence of the British ships was soon filled by those of other nations, particularly French, Spanish, Portuguese and Dutch. The British Consul in Havana, David Turnbull, calculated that, out of seventy-one slaving ships operating on the Cuban coast, forty were Portuguese, nineteen Spanish, eleven U.S. and one Swedish. (Thomas 1971, p. 158). It can be safely assumed that Cuba was one of the last ports of arrival for the slave trade in the 19th century.

In Cuba, there were perhaps 200,000 slaves when Spain formally banned the trade (1832) and the vast majority had entered Cuba in the thirty preceding years; perhaps as many as 75% were in fact African-born. On top of these, something between 200 and 300,000 were introduced, mostly from Africa, in the next generation or so. The trade finally came to an end by the signing of treaties between the two kings of Old Calabar and the British on the 6th of December 1841. The last census to include slaves before the emancipation, that of 1897, gives 287,827 free blacks and 171,0007 slaves. (Ortiz 1975, p. 38).

The figures available for Cuba suggest that in 1840 there were 280,000 male slaves and 150,000 female. Of those, over three quarters worked in the country, in sugar or coffee plantations. The rest remained in the cities. Those in the city often came by enough money to purchase freedom or to escape in some other way. Indeed, Africans, whether slave or free, were in the 18th century, already well-established in a number of trades in Havana and other cities especially in laundering, carpentry, cigar-making, building and tailoring, where they would remain predominant, even in the 20th century.

It is surprising, however, the large number of free men among the Africans, as seen in the early documents of the Colony. (Cabrera 1959, p. 37. She quotes M. Teresa de Rojas). In Virginia, in 1860-61, the Negro or mulatto freemen constituted only 11% of the total population of African origin; in Cuba they were at the same period 35% or over

200,00 (concretely, 227,843), covering between 14% or 16% of the total population.

The extent to which white masters took black mistresses is not easy to disentangle, but evidence suggests that it occurred in a lavish scale in both plantations and cities. Census figures show that between 1774 and 1841 there was a consistent increase, almost doubling twice in fifty years (about 88,000). The substantial number of free mulattoes compared with the low figures of mulatto slaves suggests that the majority of masters freed the slaves if they were their own children. (Thomas 1971, p. 173).

One should take a brief look at the origin of those slaves exported to America from Calabar. The earliest slaves might have come from the unlucky people of the area captured at war as well from those of their own people who were guilty of adultery or theft. (Thomas 1971, p. 160). But as war became raiding for slaves and the market network developed further inland, slaves were brought from further away. Antera Duke's men, as he mentions in his diary, traded at Umon and Enyong for slaves. Tradition holds that the major market was Itu, where the Aro provided slaves from all over Igboland.

Curtin and Vansina have shown that many of the Africans in Sierra Leone, liberated from slave ships were Igbo, as well as Ibibio and other tribes from upper Cross River like the Akunakuna, Yako and Ekoi, but there were also Tiv and people from the Cameroon Highlands. Waddell mentions also the Qua market, probably Uwet, which he says had been a great slave market. As late as 1888, most of the slaves brought to Old Calabar were from this area, presumably from

the Bamenda Grassfields of the Cameroons Highlands. Many, however, might have been Tiv, as there was a slave route from the Benue to Old Calabar, probably the same old route used by the Jukun or Akpa, whose mercenaries had been notorious in the Cross River area. (Latham 1973, p. 29).

The tribal origins of the Africans brought to Cuba are not very easy to ascertain and, since for so many years the planters depended upon non-Spanish shippers, it would seem that the Cuban black population derived from the whole range of African slave ports. Most Afro-Cubans descended from the 19th century imports of slaves. All the slaves who came in great numbers – the most numerous being the Efik-Ibibio – from that part of the coast of Guinea were called in Cuba, as I said before, Carabali. (Cabrera 1959, p. 63).

The Abakuá Society in Cuba

Among the Carabalis, that is, among the peoples belonging to the Cross River civilization, some were members of the Society of the Leopard, called *Ngbe* in Ejagham and *Ekpe* in Efik. They brought it to Cuba, where it took the Creole name of Abakuá, after *Abakpa*, term to designate the Ejagham of Calabar. (Forde p. 66, note 1a). They were also known by the popular name of *Ñáñigos*.

They tended to concentrate in the West of the island. From early times, - we are told – the stevedores, all the workers at the docks, were *Ñáñigos* – Efiks – as in Matanzas and Cárdenas. It is understandable since, like the Efik of Calabar, they were men of the sea. (Cabrera 1959, p. 39). This might

have helped the development of the Abakuá Society. Also, the fact that Carabalís were described as “very industrious and avaricious and when they made money, they kept it while others would spend it.” As a result, there were more free Carabalís than from other nations and they were also wealthier. Ortiz agrees, when he states that “if they are free, they procure with their savings a small fortune, working in the docks if they are men.” (Ortiz 1975, p. 73).

The earliest *Cabildos* (Associations) of the Carabali were established precisely in that region of Cuba and there, concretely in the town of Regla, men born in Africa of Calabar descent founded the first Abakuá lodge. Cabrera’s informants are very explicit about it. “When Abakuá began to be ‘played’ at Regla, all were Africans from Wanantú (Africa), pure Carabali. More than twenty years went by without their initiating anybody who was not Abakpa like them. They did not want to admit in their ceremonies the ‘*criollos*’ (Africans born in Cuba). They feared the indiscretion of their children, and the ‘*criollos*’ had to struggle before being admitted.” (Cabrera 1959, p. 47).

The inspector of police, Trujillo, gives a similar story in his memoirs (Trujillo 1882). “The first corporation of *Ñáñigos* was established towards 1836 in the town of Regla, under the care and protection of the *Cabildo Apapá Efi* – authorized by the *Efor* – which had already a fixed residence with government license, previous payment of the fee. May black Creoles gathered in the houses of those *Cabildos* and performed there their ceremonies of *Ñáñigos*. Since they were mostly sons of Carabalís, those ‘*of nación*’ (born in

Africa) protected them. The Carabali Abakpa are the true Nánigos and the first to come to this country from Africa, using the costumes of the Nánigos, whose name was adopted by the Creoles.” (Quoted by Cabrera 1959, pp. 47-48).

Another informant adds more details: “The first *Potencia* (lodge), all of *erensua* (Africans natives of Calabar) was Apapa Efor. And it was done here as in Calabar. Ekoi (Efor) gave being to Efik. Efik could then be called Apapa Efik. The first lodge (*juego*), Efik Buton Efi Aroro, was sponsored by the Efo at Regla.” Hence the saying: “Those from Regla know how to sing, play and dance because they learned from the Africans” (In Abakuá language, *Appapa brikamo Iyá berómo Ekue Butón Iyá bekondó, kandé itiá ororó*). Interestingly enough, this coincides with the information from Africa that the Ekpe titles were sold to the Efiks by the Efut. (Hart 1964, par 177).

“The lodges (*tierras*) of Efik in Calabar were daughters of Efor and, even though Efor did not give them the skin of the fish (Ekué), they were its creatures; but here the Efik and those of Efor, aware of being their superior in religion, began to attack each other.” Reference is made here to the conflict between rival lodges, perhaps reminiscent of ancient wars in Africa, which fought each other bitterly.

It also seems that, during the late 19th century, when slavery was ending, the Nánigos went through a semi-criminal phase, since new members were obliged to go on and kill the first passer-by they met after initiation. But, according to Thomas, this phase appears to have passed by 1900. (Thomas 1971, p.

522). This brought a very long and serious persecution of the Abakuá by the Spanish authorities and, later on, by the Cuban. Their societies were banned for some time and that increased the aura of mystery about them. Eventually, President Menocal allowed them to come back as part of an electoral deal. (Thomas 1971, p. 1125).

However, the police investigations and the eventual publication of some of their rituals brought into light some of its secrets, like their secret writing, the *Nsibidi*, which they called *Anaforuana*. The Abakuá signature of the town of Regla, for instance, was published in “*La Correspondencia de Cuba*” in 1882. (Cabrera 1975 b, p. 497).

Thompson tells us also how, in 1839, a black worker, Margarito Blanco, tried to found an Abakuá lodge in Havana. He was inspired by the success of the first one at Regla, on the other side of the port, three years before. He wanted to take the title of *Mokongo*, the guardian of the justice of Abakuá, title that was supposed to have been that of Sikan’s father. But the police detained him and he was accused of conspiracy. Among his papers, was found a fragment of paper where he had designed the first Cuban symbol derived from the *Nsibidi*. The drawing was identical to the modern symbol of *Mokongo*, a circle divided into four sections and carrying the design of four open eyes. (Thompson 1985, p. 248).

This persecution, however, did not mean that this Afro-Cuban cult disappeared; it rather flourished. Blacks found in it the means of security and social mobility. In fact, the Abakuá

Society expanded considerably from the 1850's to the 70's. Trujillo speaks about an "infinity of corporations in all the quarters of the city." And just ten years after its foundation, there were already forty '*juegos*' (lodges).

An interesting development of the society was the initiation of white men, both Spaniards and creoles. It seems this was mainly the work of that legendary character, Andrés Petit, who encouraged white men to enter into Abakuá. In 1857 they formed the lodge *Akanaran Efor Okobio Mukarará* (literally, Mother Efor of the White Initiated), sponsored by *Bakokó Efor*, one of the most powerful lodges with six hundred members. In this, they were following an ancient African tradition, since there is evidence from Calabar that a number of English ship captains had been initiated in the Ekpe Society.

"Today, an informant told Lydia Cabrera in the 1930's, we have more white *Ñáñigos* than black. And I, a *batabio* (old man) grandson of Carabali who has made many '*tierras*' tell you that they are more respectful with Abakuá than those who descend from Africans like me."

The explanation of this phenomenon and the multiplication of new lodges should be found, according to Cabrera, not only in the racial antecedents and the culture of the Cuban people. One has to take into account the powerful attraction that the mysterious has for the common man, the innate ambition to belong to a higher hierarchy and the satisfaction of that desire of superiority, of power rooted in the human soul.

Human behaviour is not explained only by the rational desire to satisfy material needs through the accumulation of wealth; the struggle for recognition is more important. (Fukuyama 1996, pp. 358-59). A *Mokongo*, Cabrera remarks, could be a poor devil, an indigent; in his *Potencia*, however, he is a chief and an immortal one. *Iyamba* is a king, *Isué*, a ‘bishop.’ (Cabrera 1959, p. 60).

These facts are enough to give an idea of the importance of this secret fraternity that has at present thousands of members, even though its ‘*tierras*’ do not go beyond Matanzas. There are *Náñigos* only in La Habana and the province of Matanzas. In the rest of the island, less favoured for unknown reasons, the Abakuá seed has not germinated.

Ceremonies: The Saga of Sikan

The *Potencias*, that is, the individual lodges ‘plant’ or ‘play’ that is, celebrate their rites once a year (if they are able to do so). Some own their own buildings and had good pantheons, others have land – *Isarako* – large enough for the needs of the exoteric ritual, like the processions or the dances of the *Iremes*, popularly called *diablitos* in Cuba. These masked dancers, incarnating the spirits of the ancestors, are known in Calabar as *Idem Ikwo*.

The ceremonies of the Abakuá cult have a purpose: to render cult to Ekué, to feed it and keep it strong. Also, to initiate the new candidates, to elevate to the dignities of the priesthood and government or to found new groups or ‘*tierras*’. And not less important, at the death of its members, the fulfillment of

the important funeral rites, which would give to the Abakúa adept definitive peace in the other world. The last ceremony in their honour is the “*levantamiento de plato*,” namely, to remove from the table the plate of the dead person. (Cabrera 1975 b, p. 40). On this occasion, a beautiful and complex *Anaforuana* emblem is drawn, destined, as Thompson puts it, to honour a multitude of ancestors.

In those ceremonies or ‘*plantes*’ at their temple (*Fambá*), the Nánigos enact the story of the discovery of the voice of Ekué and the sacrifice of Sikan. This is a long saga that enables souls to rest permanently in limbo rather than pursue forever the path of reincarnation. The different participants in the ceremony take the parts of the different protagonists in the tale: *Ekueñón* the slave; *Ekoríé*, the master of the sect; *Moruá Yansa*, the priest; *Nasakó*, the sorcerer; *Aberisún*, the executioner and so on. The initiates are known as *Okobio*. (Thomas 1971, p. 522).

Some Afro-Cubans have conferred to Usaha-Edet, one of whose citizens sold *Ngbe* to Calabar, the statute of a Holy City. Usagaré, in the Creole language of Abakúa, is sacred because it is there that the first secrets of God were revealed, along the shores of the Ndian (the Odan of the Abakúa). (Thompson 1985, p. 241).

“Tanze was an ancient king of the Ekoi. A long, long time, when the king died, his spirit became a fish, which was caught by a woman, discovering in the river the riches of the king of the Ekoi. And a man came and stole that power; he killed the woman and founded a religion. The obon Tanze is a

dead king who took the body of a fish, then that of a drum.” (Cabrera 1959, p. 88).

A different version of the same myth has also been given: “The Efut were the people chosen by God to receive the secret near Efut Ekondo. That is the portion to the right of the territory of the king of Efut; in front of the territory to the left, Efut Abua, to the north, in the region of Usaha Edet, to the south of Ibunda.”

A princess lived there, whose name was Sikan; she was the daughter of the lord of the Efut, Mokuire. Every day she used to go to fetch clear water in the Ndian with a large calabash that she left during the night in a hole, under a tall palm tree that kept watch by the shore of the river. The spirit that Sikan had caught for her people was a fish who was king before and, to believe some people, was God himself. The Afro-Cubans call this fish Tanze, which seems to be, according to Thompson, a synthesis between the Efut term meaning lord or father, *Ta*, and the common word in Ejagham for fish, *nsi*. (Thompson 1985, pp. 241-242).

Another informant explains it this way. “The fish died. A great Efut priest, *Nasako*, proceeded then to perform the rites to capture its spirit in a sacred object where its powerful voice could sound again. He removed the skin and traced the first sign of the Leopard Society on its skin: the symbol of rebirth and immortality. He initiated over the skin of the fish the seven sons of *Ngbe*, the founders who represented the seven clans of the Efut. These chiefs born at the beginning bore titles which have come to us in the hierarchy of the

Ngbe, such as it was elaborated by the Efut: *Mokongo*, *Ekueñón*, *Isué*, *Mpegó*, *Iyamba* and *Nkrikamo*. Their souls are present in the seven feathers.”

“He covered with the sacred skin of Tanze the opening of the calabash. But it reproduced very faintly the voice of Tanze, the shadow of its voice. The divining instrument of *Nasakó*, *Munongo Pabio*, spoke then, saying that it was necessary to give more life to the instrument with the blood of Sikan. And *Nasako* ordered then the sacrifice of Sikan” (Cabrera 1975 a, pp. 92-95).

Nasakó invoked the spirit of Sikan by attaching her skin to the instrument. This produced a harmonious union, skin over skin, over wood. The male and female principles became joined within a single object and the voice of Tanze recovered all its power. This miracle ensured the moral continuity of the Ejagham and the Efut and, many centuries later, of the Abakuá. (Thompson 1985, p. 243).

“When Abakuá ‘plays’ (*juega*), they say, everything goes back to the ancient time.” The Nánigos reproduce, in fact, as part of their religious rite, the story of the beginnings of the society. Their ceremonies, their ‘plays’ (*juegos*), are imitation, repetition of situations, reflection of the events that took place in the origins of the society. “Nothing is done, they say, which is not founded in the knowledge of what was done at a beginning.” That is, in the *illo tempore* of all the myths...

A good memory is therefore an indispensable condition of the ‘juego’ Abakuá. The Nánigo “well baptized” (*monina entayo*

fitumbariyén) must learn by heart the sacred historical precedents of the fraternity, prayers, speeches “*en lengua*,” that is, in Abakuá (*Enkames*), in order to recite them when possessed by his role in the ‘*plantes*’ of his *Potencia*. (Cabrera 1975 a, p. 286). He must also learn the signatures, the *Anaforuana*, that is, the mystical signs (*Ereniyó*, literally revelation) that affirm the past by the memory of the fundamental principles of their religion.

The Abakuá cult: a religion of salvation?

It is uncertain whether the Abakuá cult (reminiscent, as Roger Bastide pointed out, of the Greek mysteries of Eleusis), was transported from Africa in all its details. Its outline is clearly African but some writers doubt whether this serene element of resting away from the struggles of reincarnation, does not derive from Christian influence in Cuba itself. I tend to agree with Lydia Cabrera and her informants that this is not the case.

The Abakuá Society, one could say, spiritually breathes the atmosphere of the early mornings of time. Its fundamental aim is to protect against adverse and mysterious forces, and to achieve power through them. To this must be added the perennial desire of conquering death by means that ensure the immortality of the soul. (Cabrera 1959, p. 22).

The Ñáñigo attains salvation through a complicated ritual, like the initiated in the mysteries of Demeter, of Isis or Mithra. To become an *obonekue* is not to be an ordinary man, because he would not be a “common dead man”. “When we

die being Ñáñigos, none of us will be a lonely soul (*anima sola*), a dead man left behind without embarking (*muerto sin embarcar*).” An obscure poor soul in pain, hungry, forgotten and aggressive, stuck to the earth and very dangerous for the living. (Cabrera 1959, p. 264).

To be an Abakuá ensures for the *Indiseme* or candidate to the initiation, as in the Mysteries of the Ancients, the supreme benefits of the Consecration, of an alliance – *Nyuaó* – with the supernatural. Those benefits will be temporal, physical and eternal: because, they say, when the body rots, it becomes nothing. The body dies but the soul goes on living. The Abakuá rituals enable souls to rest and avoid the burden of reincarnation.

Lydia Cabrera has collected from her informants what one may describe as the Abakuá theology of death. It is worth quoting them literally: “Our religion defends us when alive and saves us when dead. A Ñáñigo is not afraid of death. He is guaranteed (sic) because he is consecrated, twice baptized, as a baby, by the Catholic priest, and when older, by the *Sesé* and confirmed by Ekué. He is strengthened by the *Mokuba* and protected by the Seven Royal Spirits. With all his obligations completed, he is taken to the other world, where he will meet right away his *Moninas*, all those who had been *obonekues*, the great ones, the ancient ones. He has therefore everything a dead man needs in order to be satisfied and at peace. He is given anything he needs to rest” (Cabrera 1959, p. 263).

The dead *obonekue* is not just any kind of dead. It is true that the rites, all the magic of *Nasakó*, all the forces that protect the man 'sacramented' in Ekué, cannot free him from the horror of physical death, of the terrible debt contracted with the earth. But the initiation and finally the three rites of *Asanga Weri Ñankué* guarantee him a fully satisfactory existence after death.

Satisfactory, Cabrera says, because it translates exactly the idea the *Ñáñigos* have about the soul and its needs in eternal life. (Cabrera 1959, p. 264). The souls of the dead do not rest, are unhappy, if they are not satisfied. The Mysteries of Ekué therefore promise happiness in immortality to its adepts, although that happiness may seem to us very material. The spirit of the *Ñáñigo* will be well, reunited in the other world – *el más allá* – with his mystical predecessors and brothers in religion, forming with them, thanks to his condition of Abakuá, a privileged group.

By his familiar contact with the supernatural forces, the *obonekue* develops powers which common mortals do not have. He is not chosen by a god like the *Oloorisha* of the Lucumis, but becomes strong by his 'consecration'. Drinking the *Mokuba*, a sacred drink, like the *Omiero* of the Yoruba religion, increases the vital force of the *Ñáñigo* and gives him inner protection against all evils.

The important role of the rites of purification evokes also the ancient Mysteries. To officiate and participate in the rites, the *obonekue* has to be morally and sexually pure. The *obonekue*, who has indulged in sexual activities within the seventy-two

hours before a religious ceremony or has shed his neighbour's blood or has taken a life, is 'dirty' and cannot enter the *Butame* or temple.

Sacrifices are essential to the ritual, like that of the cock, ordinary food of the Ekué, or of the goat, *Mbori*, which replaces the victim in the Abakuá drama. Through their blood, the *okobios* or adepts reach a spiritual union with the divine and ancestral forces. The *Mbori*'s blood is in fact transformed into the blood of the original victim, the Sikanekue, and the continuity of the Divine Voice is thus achieved.

Finally, the secret language used by the *obonekues* among themselves is also common to all the mystic religions. 'The kid has fallen into the milk' was the phrase used by those initiated into the Orphic liturgy, expressing their identification with both the divinity and the victim. The *obonekue* expresses the same idea, when he says: "I have genuflected on the goatskin." (*Me he hincado en el cuero*). That is, in the hide covering the drum, which represents both the victim and the sacrament. (Cabrera 1959, p. 22).

The Abakuá, who has paid his duties, who leaves his voice – his breath, that is, the life – in the sacred drum and who has the secret of the Divine Voice, makes the past present through the knowledge and power of the signs. He recreates the hill, the river, and the palm tree of the sacred places of *Bekura Mendó*, where the first events of the Society took place. He carries out the union of the spiritual and cosmic forces by concentrating them in the *Fundamento*, the Ekué,

and incarnates the mythical founders of the Society, when he masks his face. The Ñáñigo is truly a son of a powerful father, necessarily well protected. (Cabrera 1959, p. 18).

The Abakuá Language

The wealth of a civilization is expressed above all in its language. The presence of African languages in Cuba – historically demonstrated – is clear evidence of the survival of those civilizations and of the fidelity of their adherents. Those languages, as living entities, have undergone multiple alterations and their evolution has been markedly different from that found in Africa. Africans of Yoruba ancestry in Cuba speak Lucumi, those of Cross River origin speak Abakuá.

Since Abakuá was a secret society, the language was at first only spoken by its adepts who, according to Cabrera's testimony, were Africans '*de nacion*', that is, born in Africa. (Cabrera 1959, p. 10). We are told specifically: "If an Iyamba does not know how to speak the way Iyamba spoke, if he does not dominate the language, he cannot be Iyamba, who is a great man no matter wherever he goes." (Cabrera 1975 a, p. 286). Later on, with the initiation of '*criollos*', second-generation Africans, the language spread out of its membership circle and influenced even the common speech of Cuba, where Abakuá terms like *chébere*, *ñampear* or *tángana* were found everywhere. (Cabrera 1975 a, *ibid.*).

The similarity of the Abakuá society in Cuba with the Ekpe of Calabar also supports the Efik linguistic origin of the

Abakuá language. The secrecy of the society and the concern to keep its genuine character has ensured the survival of the language. The fact that people of Cross River origin were heavily concentrated, as I have said, in the city ports of Western Cuba, Havana, Cárdenas and Matanzas, undoubtedly helped the continuity of the language.

Much of the research on this language has been done by using the old notebooks (*afoñipán*) of the Abakuá priests and by interviewing old adepts. Unfortunately, as it has been pointed out, those scholars have mainly collected lexical forms and also neglected the transcription of the tones of the original language. A parallel case can be found with the Lucumi language, derived from Yoruba. It has been subjected to so much Spanish influence that it has lost its tonal system and retains, according to Adetugbo's calculations less than 50% of the Oyo Yoruba basic core terms. (Adetugbo 1973, p. 197).

It has been argued that Abakuá is a pidginized Afro-Spanish language (Nuñez-Cedeño, Nodal and Alúmo 1975) that has developed by using Spanish linguistic structures, i.e. morphology and phonology, with Efik lexical items. Spanish is therefore the substrate language and Efik the pidginized one.

One has to point out, however, that comparisons have usually been made with the Efik language, which has the advantage of having been put into writing since the middle of the 19th century by the Presbyterian missionaries of Old Calabar. They translated the Bible and other Christian texts and

eventually produced a grammar and Efik dictionary. (Goldie 1862). All this, joined to the predominance of the Efik in the trade of the region, has made the language into a kind of *lingua franca* and the literary language of the Cross River region. (Simmons 1956, p. 3). A parallel also exists with the Oyo Yoruba dialect, which, due to Ajayi Crowther's translation of the Bible into that form of Yoruba, became eventually the 'Standard Yoruba' and other versions of the language have remained for all the effects only as 'dialects'.

The Cross River region is, however, more complex ethnically and linguistically. There, next to the Efik-Ibibio dialects, one finds the Ekoi languages of the Ejagham and Qua, the Igbo-speaking Aro and the Bantu languages of the Efut, Ododop and Okoyong. Since the Ekpe Society, as evidence shows, has spread from its original habitat to all the people of the Cross River Basin and beyond, like the Banyang of West Cameroons, it is likely that many of the Abakuá terms may proceed from linguistic sources other than Efik. This fact is ignored by Nuñez-Cedeño *et al* and shows that evidently more research is needed.

The interaction in Cuba with other Africans who also used their language for their own cults, such as the Mayombé with their Congo or Bantu languages, the Arará who spoke Fon and the Orisha religion which used Yoruba language (Lucumí), should also not be ignored. Undoubtedly there has been interpenetration of linguistic elements among these languages, but it is still possible to identify in Abakuá certain features characteristic to the Efik language.

Efik speakers, that is people from the Cross River basin, entered into contact with the Spanish language at the beginning of the 16th century. Such a relationship has given rise to the Abakuá language. When such a relationship develops, a number of linguistic changes can be observed. The outcome is a vernacular characterized, as Decamp has pointed out, by “a limited vocabulary, an elimination of many grammatical devices such as number and gender, and a drastic reduction of redundant features.” (Decamp 1971). This is basically the traditional definition of a pidgin language. These processes seem to have taken place in the evolution of the Abakuá language.

Since a pidgin involves at least two languages in contact, one should look at the influence of both Spanish and Efik in the formation of the Abakuá.

The Spanish influence is clearly noticeable in the phonology of Abakuá. The most apparent phonological process is the epenthesis, i.e. vowel insertion, usually taking place in word initial and final positions.

Spanish, as it is well known, does not allow initial consonant clusters of the type ‘sC.’ They must be preceded by an ‘e’ as in España (Spain). Efik, on the contrary, often possesses initial sequences such as ‘mb’ or ‘ns’. Thus, Efik ‘*ensen unen*’ (hen’s egg) is adjusted as ‘*ensenune*’ (egg) in Abakuá. ‘*Mbok*’, wrestler in Efik is rendered as ‘*emboco*’. ‘*Eremo emboco*’, executioner. For the final consonants, the evolution consisted in inserting ‘e’ or ‘o’. An ‘o’ was usually added

after the final 'k'. '*Mbok*' (I beg) became the Abakuá '*boco*', kind.

Efik is a tonal language, where the tones help to differentiate meaning. *Oboŋ*, for instance, means mosquito, cane or king, but Abakuá retained only the last one. It is of particular interest the way that Abakuá handled the tonal features lost during the transitional period from Efik to Abakuá. The solution was not to rely on tone but to assign a different word to the different meanings. The work *mbok*, for instance, meant originally 'I beg', wrestler and sugar cane, differentiated by the tone. In Abakuá, instead, we find *boko* for 'I beg'; wrestler or executioner became *eremo emboco* and sugar cane was incorporated as *aroco mboco*.

Spanish also affected the Efik morphological system. The Efik plural formation by a prefix to the singular was lost and the Spanish pluralization adopted by adding 'es' to words ending with a consonant. The Efik plural of *obo* (king), *mboŋ* (kings) was replaced in Abakuá by *obones* (kings). Spanish also influenced verb formation like in '*ñampear*', to kill or '*enkamar*' from *nkam*, legend, to tell stories. (Cabrera 1959, p. 144).

The influence of Efik, on the other hand, is considerable in the lexical items. For instance, *Abasi*, God; *umon*, water; *obon*, chief or king; *ekué*, leopard, etc. There are, of course, modifications like the loss or change of certain vowels and the addition of some consonants.

The influence of other languages may be detected by the presence of certain sounds like 'sh' or 'I', which are not found in the Efik phonetic repertoire. This could be due to Efik having borrowed previously from other languages like Bantu, where those sounds are common. The Efut, for instance, neighbours of the Efik, are Bantu-speaking. It may also be due to a later influence in Cuba where many African languages coexisted.

In conclusion, although Efik has lost in Abakuá many of its characteristics, it seems clear that Abakuá is derived from it and may be described as a pidginized Efik. To ascertain finally whether it is a dead or a living language more research is clearly needed.

The Writing: Nsibidi and Anaforuana

Alagoa, in his study of the peoples of the Cross River Basin speaks of the great cultural achievements of these communities. He cites, as one of the most spectacular examples, the development of a secret writing, the *Nsibidi*, associated with Ekpe. (Alagoa 1980, pp. 61-62). For him, *Nsibidi* is the reduction into writing of the sign language used in the Ekpe and other societies among the Ekoi groups on both banks of the Cross River and in the Igbo country as far as Bende. It is also found among the Efik and the Ibibio.

The ideograms of the Ejagham refute the myth that considered Africa as a continent without writing. The Ejagham have in fact conceived and transmitted a unique form of writing, of signs representing ideas, called *Nsibidi*.

They are symbols incarnating numerous powers. Thompson, who has written a fascinating essay on the Nsibidi, gives mainly Ejagham examples, but the men and women of Usaha Edet among the Efut, Bende among the Igbo and Ekeya among the Okobo Ibibio had a reputation for their superiority in the arts of *Ngbe* and the writing of *Nsibidi*.

In his pioneering study on the Ejagham, Talbot stated that “the Ekoi who have a strong Bantu strain, claim, and in what seems good grounds, to have originated the whole system.” And he added that a greater variety of signs seem to exist among the Ekoi. It is of considerable antiquity and now highly conventionalized. One of the oldest clubs, existing before the *Ngbe*, bears even the same name. It was a powerful society charged with the execution of criminals and only chiefs belonged. (Talbot 1912, pp. 305-306).

The late king of Oban told Thompson in 1978 about two versions of the origin of Nsibidi. First, he said, *Nsibidi* came from the dreams of certain men who learned the secrets and told them afterwards. Then, he told him a second one: The mermaids have taught us to write the *Nsibidi* (*nga nsibidi adohe – aku natogena wud nsibidi*). An Ejagham student, who translated the sentence for me, corroborated the fact that *Nsibidi* came from the mermaids or water deities. Their traditional narratives in fact speak of supernatural aquatic metamorphoses, legends of fish that were really leopards and leopards that were kings. Those images entered also into their works of art. Thompson, for instance, describes a plate from Old Calabar found in the Glasgow Museum, representing two

fish-leopards with a checkerboard skin, next to a mermaid with a chewing stick. (Thompson 1985, p. 247).

For Thompson, the *Nsibidi* was a feminine art, a realization of the *Nkim* or 'fattening house', where women preparing for marriage received a thorough education. There, they learned the art of body painting, hairdressing, dancing and singing, as well as ordinary and ceremonial cookery. More particularly, they learned several methods of *Nsibidi* writing, like in the embroidering (*Ekpata okok*) or appliqué of clothes (*Mbufari*) or in pyrography, like the well-known *Effrigi* ceremonial fans. They also learned how to weave the blue and white cotton cloth known as *Ukara ngbe*.

In the major Ejagham societies (*Nnimm*, *Eja* and *Ngbe*), the elders based their prestige and power on the mastery of those symbols of sacred presence and reminiscence, which were the traditional codes of their founders and of eminent women. The power of the *Nsibidi* is a mystery. Its signs represent the heart, the very depth of the Ejagham societies. The important *Nsibidi* symbols of rank and ritual were reserved to the elite of *Nnimm* and *Ngbe*. To reach a high degree meant to be able to look at the impressive calligraphic models traced in secret chambers.

There are darkened emblems of moral intimidation as well as complex hierarchical symbols and secrets of initiation. (Thompson 1985, p. 248). They also indicate the final rites and only the elite of their societies can look at those signs. (Thompson 1985, p. 228). Perhaps, as Alagoa remarks, this is the reason why it never developed into a proper script. It was

thought to be dangerous in some way. In Ejagham language, *Nsibidi* means ‘cruel letters’ and Talbot found that *sibi* meant ‘bloodthirsty’.

They are rare those who are able to contemplate the richer and more terrifying symbols of the *Nsibidi* corpus, the signs drawn on the ground in order to overcome a crisis or to honour the funerals of an important personality. The late Ndidem of Big Qua Town in Calabar told Thompson that few Europeans have seen those signs, because they were drawn with white chalk on the floor of the house of the deceased before the members of his family and then, quickly erased before anybody else entered. (Thompson 1985, p. 295).

The *Nsibidi* signs are totally different from Western script. The invocation of a divine origin and the concentration of power upon a seat of ultimate justice determine the tracing of the most important signs. The vision of a script coming from the waters allows a better understanding of the meaning of this African writing. It is an aesthetic exercise rather than something written and understood in the logical categories of the West.

The power of noting down events by emblems and ideograms, with the confidence born from the contact with its noble secret source – the lord Tanze enclosed in the instrument- inspired the foundation and the persistence of *Ngbe* among the Efut and its creolized homologue, the Abakuá Society in Cuba. (Thompson 1985, p. 244). The Afro-Cubans are in fact their spiritual descendants.

Their signs, proliferating in multiple variations, have developed as a vast musical symphony. Lydia Cabrera has gathered over five hundred of those signs in a collection of great beauty. (Cabrera 1975 b). And yet, the name *Nsibidi* has disappeared. It was replaced by three Creole terms: *Anaforuana* (sign), *Gandó* (signature) and *Ereniyó* (revelation). (Cabrera 1959, pp. 68 and 178). The last term, making reference to what one has seen, places the *Anaforuana* in the context of a mystical vision. In the Cameroons, among the Banyang, to be a member of the *Ngbe* (*Ekpe*) is synonymous of “seeing *Ngbe*”. (Ruel 1973, p. 245).

The first Cuban signs derived of the *Nsibidi* were not only priestly signatures but also the identification of Cuban cities. The Abakuá signature of the city of Regla, as I mentioned, was published in ‘*La Correspondencia de Cuba*.’ (Cabrera 1975 b, p. 497). Rebaptised in creolized Efut language, La Habana became *Ninkwe Amanison Yorama*; Matanzas, *Otia Fondaga* and Cárdenas, *Itia Kanim Usere*.

The many branches of *Ngbe* in Africa were reduced to two in Cuba. The *Nkanda* branch of Calabar seems to have inspired the Abakuá writing. The emblem of the title *Mokongo*, for instance, resembles the circle divided into four of *Nkanda*. For others, it is the symbol of the original calabash in which the Voice was taken from the waters, echo of the “calabash of *Nkanda*” evoked by Jeffreys in 1923. (Thompson 1985, p. 248).

The meanings given to their signs by the Abakuá attest to the wealth of their imagination while they commemorate the

Cross River symbolic tradition. According to them, the three feathers on top of the circle represent three agglomerations of the Efut country: Usaha-Edet, Bekura and Efut-nsun. (Cabrera 1975 b, p. 183). The circles inside symbolize the eyes of Tanze and of Sikan and the fusion of their powers. They repeat hypnotically a secret theme of mystical watchfulness and accomplishment.

The blackened *Nsibidi*, symbol of danger and terror among the Efik and the Ejagham, appear also in Cuba at the time of the battles between Efut and Efik lodges. It is the dreaded “emblem of war and blood”. (*Emblema de guerra y sangre*), used for the declaration of hostilities between the ‘*tierras*.’ (Cabrera 1959, p. 40).

Margarito had chosen one of the essential emblems of the *Nsibidi* corpus, with its connotations of prestige and adopted it as his signature. From then on, each priest would have his own personal signature, an emblem called *Gandó*. (Cabrera 1975 b, pp. 158-77). He and his successors concentrated their calligraphic activity on a new formulation of the *Ngbe* symbols of initiation, discipline and funerals. Certain initiation symbols appear, similar to those described by Talbot as signs of initiation to *Nkanda*, traced with chalk on the front and back of the initiated.

Thompson has tried to interpret some of the symbols used. Such are the enigmatic cross, called by the Abakuá *Cuatro Vientos* or *Antrofomakoirén* (the Four-Winds). (Cabrera 1975 b, pp. 67-69). The arrows, which are witnesses of aggression or virility, reflect the symbolic wars and wrestling contests of

the Ejagham and the Efik. The triangle, which according to some, represents the hill of Ibon Nda in the ancient Efut country, where the spirit of Tanze was invoked for the first time. The rhomb divided into four is the symbol of the dangerous priests, especially of Nkoboro. The calabash with the seven feathers recalls the calabash with feathers of *Nkanda* and the feathered emblems of Ejagham symbolism, like the “drum of silence.” (Thompson 1985, pp. 252 and ff.).

The founding priests of Abakuá wrote and kept the memory of what was most sacred for them; they translated into ideograms their visions and fundamental principles. The *Anaforuana* are “reaffirmations of what has happened in Africa when the ancient lodges were founded, evocations, sacred emblems of authorization which give force to what we do here.” (Cabrera 1975 a, p. 215). Once upon a time, Mpegó traced the first symbols of the sacred river, Odan, and of the sacred tree and then, all the others. “The signs drawn since that time, the Abakuá say, are not erased in this world or in the other. They create and dominate: what is not marked is not sacred nor is real.” (Cabrera 1959, p. 178). This is why the *Anaforuana* constitute not only a chef d’oeuvre of calligraphic art but a synthesis of great power and mystery.

* * * * *

As I said at the beginning of this essay, the Abakuá Society of Cuba, that American fruit of the Cross River civilization, is a unique mechanism of tradition. It has enabled that ancient and rich African culture to continue in the New World and thrive there in spite of the hardships of the slave trade, the

alienation of forced labour and the difficulties of integration in a foreign society.

This has been possible, as I have hinted before, because the Abakuá religion – and I insist it is a religion – manifests the characteristics of a true tradition. Namely, the links with the beginnings, the heroic or mythical times; the spiritual and even physical continuity from generation to generation and the capacity of adaptation proper to all living entities but denied to theories and ideologies, as traditionalism certainly is.

It is true that the contributions of the Abakuá Society have not always been on the positive side. Hence, the persecution and suspicion it has suffered. But, like the original Ekpe Society of the Ejagham, Efut and Efik, it has also been a powerful cultural force and a source of integration.

In this short and tentative essay, I have only managed to sketch a portion of the cultural and artistic wealth still waiting to be revealed about the Abakuá Society and, by inference, about the outstanding civilization of the Cross River basin of Nigeria. Much needs still to be done.

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9. A Native Son in Need of Freedoms

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Bigger Thomas, the American

That Richard Wright wants the protagonist of his famous novel, *Native Son*, to be seen as a product of America is obvious. He actually calls him “an American product, a native son of this land,” in his explanation of “How Bigger Was Born” (xxi). It is significant that, a native son of America, Bigger is a synthesis of real life “Biggers” (young Americans) that Richard Wright physically “met and grew to know” (xvi) as he wandered and wondered. He describes the imagination from which the figure emanates as “a kind of community medium exchange: what he [the author] has read, felt, thought, seen, and remembered is translated into extensions as impersonal as a worn dollar bill” (vii).

Wright, however, is not alone in his projection of his hero as a native son of America. In his essay, “An Unconscious Determinant in ‘Native Son’,” published in *Psychoanalysis and Literature*, Frederic Wertham convincingly places the novel in “political and social framework”- or “the soil out of which *Native Son* came” (322, 323).

Even James Baldwin, Wright’s enemy-friend, whose assault on the real essence of *Native Son* put him and his mentor at loggerheads, presents the novel as “unquestionably” “the

most powerful and celebrated statement we have yet had of what it means to be a Negro in America" (*Black Voices*, 594) and goes on to say that it is impossible to "divorce this book from the specific social climate of that time." In his opinion:

It was one of the last of those angry productions, encountered in the late twenties and through the thirties, dealing with the inequities of the social structure of America. It was published one year before our entry into the last world war (595).

Published in 1940, the novel in which Bigger Thomas has his being, owes a great deal to the atmosphere that occasioned the enunciation of the "Four Freedoms" by Franklin Delano Roosevelt on January 6, 1941 – i.e. about a year later. It can, therefore, be affirmed that the tragedy of Bigger Thomas is a function of the threat to the basic freedoms as perceived by Franklin D. Roosevelt, notwithstanding the fact that the experiences against which Richard Wright's protagonist rebels are essentially domestic. This is how Roosevelt characterizes the "four freedoms":

The four freedoms of common humanity are as much elements of man's needs as air and sunlight, bread and salt. Deprive him of all these freedoms and he dies – deprive him of a part of them and a part of him withers. Give them to him in full and abundant measure and he will cross the threshold of a new age, the greatest age of man.

These freedoms are the rights of men of every creed and every race, wherever they live. This is their heritage, long withheld (Norman Rockwell's Four Freedoms, 109).

Bigger Thomas is, certainly, part of the “common humanity” about which Franklin D. Roosevelt talks. As a matter of fact, Richard Wright maintains that “Bigger Thomas was not black all the time; he was white, too, and there were literally millions of him, everywhere” (xiv). A synthesis of American personalities, he is simply an American who happens to be black. It is also noteworthy that Wright acknowledges how the operations of Hitler and his fascist cohorts helped to bring into being the personality of Bigger Thomas (xviii).

Franklin D. Roosevelt’s enunciation was certainly based on the president’s awareness of the iniquitous capabilities of despotism and fascist domination. As an American and product of the era that called for the reaffirmation of the “four freedoms,” Bigger Thomas has need for the freedoms not only as conceived by Franklin D. Roosevelt, who introduced them as “four essential human freedoms” (*Annals*, 45), but also as they relate to his personal existence among his fellow native sons and daughters of America.

Bigger Thomas and the Four Freedoms

The four freedoms are so interrelated that no man can be said to be free unless he possesses all of them. Franklin D. Roosevelt is positive: “deprive him of a part of them and a part of him withers.” This, to a great extent, means that the possession of one of them needs the presence of all others to be functionally meaningful. It is not surprising, therefore, that what begins as Bigger’s quest for freedom from want, when he accepts to go and work for the Daltons, ends in his death. Satisfaction of material wants (i.e. freedom from wants) cannot be functionally adequate in the absence of the other freedoms.

Roosevelt’s articulation of the four freedoms contains what the president describes as “expectations” upon which “inner and abiding strength of our economic and political systems” is dependent (*Annals* 44-45). These constitute what has come to be known as “an economic bill of rights”:

Equality of opportunity for youth and for others;
Jobs for those who can work;
Security for those who need it;
The ending of special privilege for the few;
The preservation of civil liberties for all (*Annals* 44).

The contents of this “bill,” in addition to Bigger’s obvious need for freedom from the want of food, shelter and clothing are relevant to the 20-year-old youth who shares one small dirty room not only with his mother, brother and sister but also with rats that do not hesitate to engage them in a pitched

battle for the control of “the tiny one-room apartment.” Witness the fight with “a huge black rat” that opens the novel. The “rat squealed and leaped at Bigger’s trouser-leg and snagged it in his teeth, hanging on” (9). Even when Bigger dislodges it from his trouser-leg, “it rolled over and leaped again” at Bigger. It fights to death, in the quest for its own freedom from want, with “its two long yellow tusks showing distinctly” (10). It, thus, symbolizes Bigger Thomas whose quest for freedom from want ends in his death after a dogged struggle marked with fear.

Bigger also quests for freedom of worship. Admittedly, he does not care for his mother and her pastor’s brand of religion which he considers as a mode of escape from reality comparable to his girlfriend, Bessie’s attachment to alcohol. “Nobody but poor folks get happy in church,” he affirms (329). Admittedly, he rejects the cross, symbol of Christianity, which Reverend Hammond, his mother’s pastor, puts around his neck. Yet Bigger is in dire need of freedom of worship. In rejecting Christianity, he is only questing for freedom to relate to his maker as he deems fit. Theodore H. Evans would possibly subscribe to this suggestion, relating it to the spirit of Roosevelt’s pronouncement and Rockwell’s interpretation of it. This is what he says about “Freedom of Worship” as enunciated by Franklin D. Roosevelt and painted by Norman Rockwell:

Freedom of worship, both as it was proclaimed by President Roosevelt and imaged on canvas by Norman Rockwell, affirms a pluralistic approach to religion and culture that respects, encourages, and protects the forms, customs,

liturgies and beliefs of all religious traditions, *and of no religious tradition at all* (NRFF 102. Emphasis is mine).

The fact of the matter is that Bigger pulls the cross from around his neck, casts it away and, when Reverend Hammond returns to pray for him, asks him to “take your Jesus and go” (314) because he associates the cross with an instrument designed to murder his personhood. “He was feeling the cross that touched his chest, like a knife pointed at his heart □ it was an evil and black charm which would surely bring him death” (313). And his identification of the cross that “hung around his throat” with agent of death is not baseless. He has seen a cross on fire as a warning by members of the Ku Klux Klan of their intention to burn him to death (312), and “wanted no more crosses that might turn to fire while still on his chest” (315).

In any case, Bigger’s choice to relate to his maker in his own way is in line with what Will Durant, in the article “Freedom of Worship,” recognizes as American spirit. He discusses a group of worshipers he observed in a little church and remarks:

They do not demand that others should worship as they do, or even that others should worship at all. In that waving valley are some who have not come to this service. It is not held against them; mutely these worshipers understand that faith takes many forms, and that men name with diverse words the hope that in their hearts is one (NRFF 129).

Bigger Thomas lacks another freedom: that of speech and expression. While there is no explicit law forbidding Bigger to express himself by way of free speech, the black youth does not possess the prerequisite for the exercise of that right. For, as The Office of War Information Essays, 1942 points out: "Literacy is a prerequisite of free speech, and gives it point" (NRFF 114). This, however, is acquired through formal education, which, unfortunately, is denied Bigger through segregation and other subtle forms of Jim-Crowism. Twenty years old, he could only get to the eighth grade and is, thus, denied the opportunity of becoming an aviator. He complains about this lack of opportunity after watching a plane in flight:

Why they make us live in one corner of the city? Why don't they let us fly planes.

He talks to his lawyer, Max, about it towards the end of his life:

I wanted to be an aviator once. But they wouldn't let me go to the school where I was suppose' to learn it. They built a big school and then drew a line around it and said that nobody could go to it but those who lived within the line. They kept all the colored boys out (327).

Ironically, a newspaper vaunts the efficacy of this racial discrimination in denying Bigger Thomas and people like him of quality education which actually adds up to gagging and depriving them of the freedom of speech and expression:

If separate schools were maintained, it would be fairly easy to limit the Negroes' education by regulating the appropriation of moneys through city, county, and state legislative bodies (261).

Inability to express one's feelings and mind freely creates an explosive situation – a recipe for violence. In Bigger's case, it contributes greatly towards the forging of the deceitful mask of "a black, timid Negro" (176) and "a dumb cluck [who] doesn't know anything" (200), which Bigger advisedly wears, making a fool of, and violently giving a bloody nose to the white man who has denied him of the self-confidence and self-expressiveness that come with the enjoyment of the freedom of speech and expression.

While Bigger's life is hampered by the absence of the freedom of speech and expression, freedom from want and freedom of worship, fear is the catalyst that precipitates the violence that spells his tragedy. All of Bigger's crimes are motivated by his excessive fear of the white man symbolized by the colour white: "the white blur," "white walls," "white cat;" and "the snow." All these frighten the "rat," Bigger, who, like the "huge black rat" of the opening scene, must fight tooth and nail to neutralize the danger they portend. In this connection, the image of the white man as conceived by Bigger is noteworthy:

To Bigger and his kind white people were not really people; they were a sort of great natural force, like a stormy sky looming overhead, or like a deep swirling river stretching suddenly at one's feet in the dark (109).

Fear-inspiring!

Equally noteworthy is how he feels when he finds himself in the presence of Mr. Dalton for the first time. He is so dazed by fear that “he wanted to wave his hand and blot out the white man who was making him feel like this. If not that, he wanted to blot himself out” (49-50).

On another occasion, after noting the windows of opportunity closed to him (no shelter, no education, and no prerequisite for free speech and self-expression) he confesses:

Every time I think of ‘em, I feel ‘em - It’s like fire. - It’s like I was going to do something I can’t help. - (24).

Of course, he eventually does “something” he “can’t help” when, in Mary Dalton’s room, he “feels” the presence of “the white blur” approaching where he stands by Mary’s bed. “He clenched his teeth and held his breath, intimidated to the core by the awesome white blur floating toward him” (85). He smothers the young woman to death in the process. He also does “something” when cold and engulfed in white snow he kills his girlfriend, Bessie, after making love to her. It is significant that when, at the last moment, he wavers, considering abandoning the idea of killing Bessie, he is woken up to action by “a sense of the white blur hovering near, of Mary burning, of Britten, of the law tracking him down” (222).

Bigger's violence is never gratuitous. It is always an attempt to eliminate the fear in him - an attempt to be free from fear. Robert Bone possibly has this in mind when he writes:

Each successive wave of violence is a means of reducing fear, for great fear automatically produces great violence in Bigger (Bone 145).

Symbolism of the Murder of Mary

Commenting on Franklin D. Roosevelt's "Four Freedoms," Brian Urquhart talks about people's fear of "weapon of mass destruction," and affirms that "the only effective way to dispel fear is to attack its causes" (NRFF 106). Urquhart writes about the situation that called forth Roosevelt's "Four Freedoms." Yet his comment is relevant even today. "The only effective way to dispel fear is to attack its causes" (NRFF 106). This, obviously, accounts for the United States of America and its allies' attack on Iraq. "They fear the weapon of mass destruction which the chaotic conditions of some parts of the world may well deliver into the wrong hands" (NRFF 106).

Be that as it may, fear and the desire – conscious or unconscious – "to dispel fear" by attacking "its causes" accounts for Bigger's killing of Mary Dalton. It also accounts for his killing of his girlfriend, Bessie Mears, who might snitch on him if left alive (169). Bigger Thomas is afraid of being delivered, by his contact with these young women, to the "white blur" – blind and insensitive.

Thus the killing of Mary, though accidental, constitutes, for Bigger, an outlet to freedom from fear. He has not killed Mary as a person; he has killed Henry Dalton's daughter as a symbol of white oppression that causes him great fear:

It was not Mary he was reacting to when he felt that fear and shame. Mary had served to set off his emotions, emotions conditioned by many Marys. And now that he had killed Mary he felt a lessening of tension in his muscles; he had shed an invisible burden he had long carried (109).

The aspect of him that, hitherto, has been repressed by fear is liberated and wells up:

The hidden meaning of his life – a meaning which others did not see and which he had always tried to hide – had spilled out (101).

He boldly accepts responsibility for his action, although it has been an accident:

No; it was no accident, and he would never say that it was. There was in him a kind of terrified pride in feeling and thinking that some day he would be able to say publicly that he had done it. It was as though he had an obscure but deep debt to fulfil to himself in accepting the deed (101).

It must be pointed out that, under normal circumstances, there is nothing wrong about Bigger helping Mary in her room,

given the situation: the helplessness of the young woman described as being “dead drunk” by her mother (85), a young woman so drunk that Bigger could get her to her room “only by lifting her bodily” (83). But the fear inflicted on him by the white man, who apparently believes that every black man would rape a white woman, if he found one alone, was too overwhelming to let him reveal his presence in Mary’s room.

He also kills Bessie out of the same fear because she “knew too much” about his activities – past, present and future (168). “Fear sheathed him in fire” (169). He kills her to free himself from that fiery “fear.”

Conclusion

Bigger Thomas lives in a society where fear is used as a weapon to keep Blacks in their place. A newspaper report provides the *modus operandi* of, and rationale that underpins, the strategy:

This is done by regulating their speech and actions. We have found that the injection of an element of constant fear has aided us greatly in handling the problem (261).

The report calls this strategy a “psychological deterrent” (261). What it does not, however, recognize is that a denial of free “speech and actions” through “fear” is a recipe for violence – especially when the victim of the denial is also in need of the other two basic freedoms: the freedom from want and the freedom of worship. This is the creation of Bigger Thomas, the violent monster.

His murder of Mary Dalton is only an actualization or emergence of a self-repressed by fear nurtured by the so-called "psychological deterrent." An externalization of a dream deferred (to use Langston Hughes's phrase); his crime is a self-salvaging process. It is in this sense that it is "an act of creation" (366):

"He had murdered and had created a new life for himself. It was something that was all his own... His crime seemed natural; he felt that all of his life had been leading to something like this... The hidden meaning of his life – a meaning which others did not see and which he had always tried to hide – had spilled out" (101).

Bigger is now "a man reborn" and feels "like a man risen up well from a long illness" (106). Having done what Whites think he is incapable of doing – destruction of the epitome of their civilization – he feels like a man: their "equal":

The knowledge that he had killed a white girl they loved and regarded as their symbol of beauty made him feel the equal of them, like a man who had been somehow cheated, but had now evened the score (155).

Bigger Thomas does not survive his crimes; he dies. But he dies a proud "native son," without much to regret. He says as much before he dies:

"I reckon I believe in myself... I ain't got nothing else... I got to die..." "I'm all right. For real, I am." (391; 392).

Bigger Thomas dies an American battling for the sustenance of human dignity and freedom.

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10. From Wonder to Resonance: Space, Identity and Feminism in Sandra Cisneros's *The House on Mango Street*

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No single “ethnic” novel enjoys the same amount of attention as Sandra Cisneros’s *The House on Mango Street*, except perhaps, Toni Morrison’s *Beloved*. *The House on Mango Street* does not only enjoy regular adoption in courses on ethnic/multi-cultural literature in the United States, the list of secondary sources on the novel grows every semester. What is it, then, in this narrative that has endowed it with the status of a classic? As we read this novel we will put in focus its response to the issues of space, identity, and feminism from the perspective of Chicano/a experience.

The terms “wonder” and “resonance” are, of course, those of Stephen Greenblatt. They are used in a 1990 essay of his entitled: “Resonance and Wonder”. The essay begins with a hilarious account of the cultural and historical migrations of a “hat” that now sits in a small glass case in the library of Christ Church, Oxford. Greenblatt’s perspicacity in the presentation of the “hat” rests on his conception of it not simply as an article of dress but as a miniature history. The lesson from the story of the hat points to the fact that cultural artifacts “do not stay still”. They exist in time bound up with personal and institutional conflict, negotiations and appropriations”. The overall aim of this introduction for

Greenblatt is to emphasize on the embeddedness of cultural objects in the contingencies of history, what Edward Said calls the worldliness of culture. It is from this trajectory of the embeddedness of culture that we can apprehend the link between “wonder” and “resonance”.

“Wonder” is used by Greenblatt to mean the power possessed by the text or any cultural artifact to arrest the reader’s or viewer’s attention. As he has put it, “the power of the object... to stop the viewer in his tracks, conveys an arresting sense of uniqueness”. (276) It is the quality in the text that imbues it with a sense of difference, and subject to contemplation. We can illustrate this sense of wonder by recalling our first encounter with Native American totem poles at the entrance to the Field Museum in Chicago. These totem poles come from Haida Indian village, West Coast of the Queen Charlotte Island in British Columbia, Canada. As you climb the long stairway pass through the entrance into the ticket collection stand you come face-to-face with these tall totem poles. One was stopped in one’s tracks, as Greenblatt would have put it, by the presence of these poles. Even “Sue”, the recovered skeleton of a giant dinosaur in the central hall did not hold as much fascination for one as these poles. As one searched through the figural presences on these poles, one was struck by the unique difference between the two poles, the fact that each totem pole recaptures a different set of activities and figural presences. But in spite of the differences, one observed that the number three seems to be consistent in the representation of the figures. The question then was why three?

“Resonance “as it is used by Greenblatt conveys a unique sense of value as opposed to wonder. “By resonance” he means, “the power of the object displayed to reach beyond its formal boundaries to a larger world”. In addition, resonance evokes “in the viewer the complex, dynamic cultural forces from which the object in view has emerged. Resonance extends the value of the art object or text beyond its formal limit to a cultural universe. Greenblatt emphasizes that the text achieves this as “metaphor” or “metonymy” – it stands as a tip of the iceberg that plunges the viewer or reader into impenetrable depths. Again, in the Field Museum in Chicago, one was held not simply by the formal features of the Haida Indian totem poles, the wood, the surreal canvass of the interaction between man, animals, and spirits, and the fact that the number 3 tends to dominate. It is their resonance that preoccupied one. In short one wanted to see how those poles do reach out beyond their formal boundaries to a larger world outside the museum. The question that was prominent in one’s mind was: of what relevance are those poles to the Native American Indian in the present concern to redefine identity in a multicultural United States? It is this same question that preempts the urgent need to read Sandra Cisneros’s *The House on Mango Street*.

Our reading of *The House on Mango Street* is intended to show that the trajectory from wonder to resonance will reveal that the novel’s insertion into American history and literature is secured on the tripartite relationship between space, identity, and feminism. Essentially, when we read *The House on Mango Street* as a piece of narrative we must not stop on its surface lyricism manifesting as the account of an innocent

girl. We must be attentive to its underlying relationship to the construction of ethnic consciousness in a multi-ethnic United States. In short, the import of the understanding of our central question must issue out from the vision of the world revealed in *Mango Street*. The perceptive critic must not be content in asking the first question about form and content. To remain at this level is to be held in the clutch of wonder, an alibi figure for a formalism determined to celebrate the text as a neutral entity. What gives our analysis depth is in revealing what is not very obvious in the interface of form and content, viz. the vision of the world revealed at the level of resonance. What shocks in *Mango Street* is not its obvious “simplicity”, but its silence: this *silence* reverberates with intensity sketch after sketch until the very denouement with the narrator’s act of rupture articulated in a quest for “a house of my own”. (108)

The exchange from “wonder” to “resonance” provides the opportunity for Greenblatt to reiterate the salient features of new historicism as a method. The key issue is in stressing the “embeddedness of cultural objects in the contingencies of history”. (Greenblatt, 271) We can appreciate the resonance of a text when we place it in the light of its mode of insertion in its world. Resonance also brings us to the awareness that one can possibly gain through the text of one’s specific potential or limited possibilities in the light of choices and decisions. This is where Greenblatt’s idea becomes an important starting point in this reading of *Mango Street*. This is because *Mango Street* enchants us with wonder. But it is animated by a compelling desire to action, to be different. It is on the basis of resonance rather than wonder that we can

appreciate the choices and decisions inaugurated by the narrative.

We will recall a case made by Felicia Cruz on her reflection on the supposed “simplicity” of *Mango Street*. She begins by recalling the feeling of “ordinary readers” on the novel. These readers convey a feeling of disappointment at *Mango Street* because it does not offer “as much as [they] hoped to”. In other words, their expectation was frustrated because they did not come across anything in *Mango Street* that moved them enough to sustain their interest. The interest of these readers is borne out of a conviction that a text must be clear and definite about what it must say. That is to say, for these set of readers everything in the text must be out in the open. And Cruz recalls, also, that critics’ assessment of the novel is predicated on its supposed simplicity, accessibility and directness. Indeed the critics’ reading is animated by a conception of the text as a mere reflection, a positivist purview on an assumed ground in the text. Remarkably, the narrative of *Mango Street* is perceived as Sandra Cisneros’s own life and experience. Robin Ganz, for instance, asserts that:

Sandra Cisneros... found her voice in the dingy rooms of her house on Mango Street, on the cruel but comfortable streets of the barrio.

And:

After she'd explored and mastered that territory, i.e., writing from the point of view and in the voice of Esperanza (the young Sandra). (Ganz, 19 & 25).

What is at stake here is a matching up of narrative landscape with the writer's own experience - a matching up of two levels of meaning, the denotative and the connotative. Interestingly, this process of matching up is realized at the levels of setting and character. Thus the fictionalized Mango Street is said to equate or to correspond to the street of the writer's real experience, while the character Esperanza is said to be the young Sandra. What this implies is that *Mango Street* is perceived as the culmination of tendencies peculiar to the consciousness of a specific ethnic group. By adopting the point of view of Esperanza (the young Sandra) as Ganz puts it, the novel reflects how these tendencies are orientated towards equilibrium

Behind this type of reading by Robin Ganz is a historicist inspired criticism out to pin down the personal experiences within the spirit of an age and be bracketed within its ideas. This in turn annuls the individual capacity for thought. Its basic assumption is that "great works of art were triumph of resolution that they were in Bakhtin's term, monological..." (Greenblatt, 275). In addition, it perceives aesthetic integration as a mark of the writer's commitment and integration to a community.

The pitfall of readings such as Robin Ganz's is that they are animated by a positivist purview of the link between literature and social reality. It perceives social reality as a

pre-given, normative totality which the text reflects possibly in accord with the needs of a particular community. When one was in graduate school this purview and structuralism formed the basis for defining the difference between national and regional literature.

At the present time, the insight of new historicism sheers off the convenient division between text and context. This is because social contexts themselves are narrative constructions that come to life through the discursive use of power. The truth value of a social reality is dependent on who is narrating that reality. This is because who narrates is a subject in his/her own right whose authenticity is animated by a domain of power and interest. The implication of this for this paper is the understanding that there is no universal truth existing in given background to be discovered in the text. It is on this basis that we can understand the dialectic between space, identity and feminism in Cisneros's novel.

Before we explore this dialectic it is pertinent to stress that what we see as Cisneros's "simplicity" and directness of presentation are the fabric in her overall strategy of representation. This is a strategy which Bonnie TuSmith has called "tricksterism". (TuSmith, 4) As "can be found in the works of numerous ethnically-identified writers", "tricksterism" allows the writer to dissimulate and deceive while reshaping consciousness. Cisneros dissimulates the narrative voice of her novel by imbuing Esperanza with the quality of innocence. But behind her girlish sheen and charm lie the tortuous issues of identity, space and the question of

womanhood. This essay intends to trace how these issues are intertwined in *The House on Mango Street*.

Space is central in the entire narrative of *Mango Street*. Its conception, construction, and utility animate character, action, point of view and theme. It constitutes a key to the question of identity and feminism in the novel. It is pertinent at this juncture therefore to explain our use of space.

Traditionally, space is used in connection with setting in works of narrative, thus setting is defined more broadly as: "spatiotemporal circumstances in which the events of a narrative occur". (Prince, 87) This definition is crucial for it highlights the temporal quality of narrative fiction. This is to say that in the interaction between characters, their projection through point of view, and in the arrangement of incidents, narrative emerges as not only directional in scope (incidents unfold from one stage to another, characters change, etc.) but are essentially secured in a world. Narrative re-enacts man's perennial longing for space and the quest for being.

The phenomenological description of space in the works of Heidegger, and Michel de Certeau will prioritize our sense of space in Cisneros's novel. For Heidegger, particularly in "Building Dwelling Thinking", spaces open up by the fact that they are let into the dwelling of man. That is, space is not just an abstract, undifferentiated backcloth, it is a space of agency. De Certeau on his part, but also in this line, treats social spaces as more open to human creativity and action. As David Harvey has observed De Certeau, by situating space in social relationships goes beyond Foucault's exclusive

concentration of social space in organized repression (i.e., the prison, hospitals and institutions of social control). (Harvey, 213) De Certeau imbues space with what has been called a “pedestrian rhetoric”, that is in common experiences of people living out their lives. As we will see in the course of our reading, it is this conception of space as open to ordinary experiences that structures action and meaning in Cisneros’s novel.

The inaugural moment of Cisneros’s creativity is the struggle of American Latinos to come to terms with the verity of American society where they are neither the white nor black. They are cut up in the middle of the color/cultural divide. To survive means more than accepting to be “other’s middle”. It essentially means arising to the challenge of clearing a space for oneself or as Esperanza puts it, erecting “a house of my own”. It is important to note that this is not simply mere affirmation of a genetic homology between author and community. It is the declaration of agency. This is because the need for a space is borne out of historical determinants that are unfolding even as we write.

In its lead feature of April 25, 1998, entitled “American Latinos”, *The Economist* describes Latinos as “the keenest recruits to the [American] dream”. The feature begins by recalling the experience of Danny Villanueva, the first Latino to play in the National Football League. According to Villanueva, back in the 1960s, players traveled in “segregated” buses. Thus:

We'd head for these buses and I'd just stand there deciding which one to ride. The couch would say, ok! You guys on this bus, you guys on that bus; Villanueva you take a cab. (The Economist, 23)

The resonance in this account even as *The Economist* observes, is that in the politics of race in the U.S. Latinos have always been caught in the middle. "At times they are accepted, at times abused, they have never been enslaved, yet have suffered segregation". *The House on Mango Street* was published more than a decade before *The Economist* article. But it addresses this "most intriguing and potentially most important minority in the U.S. The space of Mango Street, the setting, is located between an avenue and the "other" part of the city. In this, Mango Street is an excluded, segregated space. As we will demonstrate in our reading, though the foregoing constitutes an essential aspect of the context in which Cisneros writes, it does not become a limiting force for her.

The story of the novel begins on Mango Street. The pivot of the account is the "House on Mango Street" where Esperanza's family resides. The first sketch is appropriately entitled "The House on Mango Street" From the perspective of the projection from "wonder" to resonance", we will need to ask: what is the manifest content of this sketch? And what does it not say?

A number of subject matters are encapsulated in this sketch to constitute its manifest content. There is movement. Even though the family is now stationed on Mango Street, the road

up there is not paved with gold. It is a tortuous and treacherous path that breaks off with many stops and new beginnings. She says:

We didn't always live on Mango Street. Before that we lived on Loomis on the third floor, and before that we lived on Keeler. Before Keeler it was Paulina, and before that... what I remember most is moving a lot. (3)

The sentence structure and the use of repeated forms indicate that we are listening to the voice of a child in this narrative. The language itself reflects the peripatetic and nomadic experience of this family. Although this is told by a child, the tone in the first sentence is that of an adult, who is reflecting in the retrospect on the movement that led to Mango Street. The movement to Mango Street has taken its toll on the on the group. Thus, for these tired and spent “we” the House on Mango represents a relief. It is a relief because the house is “ours”. The family has been empowered by the ownership of the house. From being a migratory dependent tenant, the family has acquired its own property. This empowers it with a degree of freedom to manage their lives and to settle down.

Apart from highlighting the pain that characterized the movement to mango Street, the narrator also presents a picture of the house the family has acquired. She says:

But then house on mango Street is not the way they told it at all. Its small and red with tight steps in front and windows so small you'd think they were holding their

breath. Bricks are crumbling in places and the front door is so swollen. (4)

Again the choice of words is important. Note the use of “But” signifying a discrepancy between expectation and actuality. The house is “ours” but it does not meet “our expectation. This is why it is characteristically small. The steps, the windows, the yard are small giving the feeling that the house is dwarfed by its neighborhood: “a small yard that look smaller between the two buildings on either side.” (4) Rather than being the fulfillment of a dream, the house has become a negation.

Movement and the presentation of the house as space constitute the manifest content of the sketch. Not that the house and the idea of mobility project a sense of space that is open to action, and subject to redefinition. The aspect of wonder in this manifest content is hinged on Esperanza’s direct and candid view of the situation. There is no dissimulation. Here is a girl telling us the nature of things as she sees them. Nevertheless, when we put what she says together a pattern begins to emerge. This pattern can be described as the dominant condition of alienation in this milieu. This condition is felt at the individual level and at the level of the community.

At the individual level Esperanza confesses her own dreams and desires. She says: “I knew I had to have a house. A real house. One I could point to”. (5) In order to appreciate this need we need to understand that house is used here as metaphor for space.

Space is not used here simply in a geographical sense as location. From the point of view of geography, Mango Street and “our” house located there is a space of constriction. Note that the ‘tight steps’ that constricts one’s legs and arrests movement. Note also that the windows that are supposed to usher in fresh air and facilitate fresh breath are “holding their breath”. The front door itself is swollen and becomes a point of obstruction. On the surface, we may take it that this house simply represents a plus for migrants who are fortunate enough to buy their own house. But note that Mango Street is in no other city but Chicago. This is Chicago of the late 1980s and not of the 1880s. Cisneros presents the city as a space of constriction. She desires and evokes an alternative space. This is a space not simply contained in terms of geography. She evokes what Roger Poole calls a philosophical space, a space of choice and of becoming. (Poole, 113)

From the communal point of view this house may be “ours”, but we see that there is no difference between Mango Street and Loomis. She shows that Loomis like Mango Street is not the part of town you could claim for yourself because the others have a negative perception for those who live “there’. That perception generates a feeling of inferiority and nothingness. Esperanza tells us of the encounter with the nun: “The way she said it made me feel like nothing”. (5) Besides, Mango Street, like Loomis, is not one of the middle class neighborhoods. This is reflected in the vignettes of house and of the street. The house on Mango Street has one wash room. While the presence of Laundromat in Loomis tells us that this place is essentially abhorrent. Loomis and Mango Street are

situated in the ghetto. Nowadays, these streets will be seen as part of the “inner city” as opposed to say, the suburbs.

We will recall Ellen McCracken’s reading of “the house... ours”. She asserts that the house on Mango Street is a reflection of lack. That is, Cisneros’s presentation of the image of house and the desire for a house of one’s own is precipitated by the contradictions of capitalism in the United States that cannot guarantee satisfactory housing for “many of the minority populations”. (McCracken, 64) This is inconformity with what we have identified as the abhorrent condition in Mango Street itself. Nevertheless, to read the “house ... ours” only in this light is to be entangled in a historicist dream for wonder. Consequently, the image and expression have resonance ideologically and economically.

Even though the image of “house” does not satisfy the ultimate desire for becoming, it opens up a vista in the life of Latinos in the United States. An important character one perceives in the lives of Latinos is the drive for mobility particularly in its positive sense. To recall *The Economist* again, “even poor Latinos have middle class aspirations”. And, indeed, “Latinos have not acquired the habit of looking to government either for welfare or for jobs”. (*The Economist*, 23) Sandra Cisneros has used her novel to address this feature. Indeed she holds her own people responsible for their own uplift. Consequently, economic migration can become a source of strength particularly when it leads to the upward mobility of the group. *The Economist*’s report shows that migration is indicative of the openness of the community and a willingness to adapt to new conditions. However the

report also shows that: "Most of these workers eventually settle down". (*The Economist*, 24) This connects with Cisneros's account on the image of "house". We are told: "The House on Mango Street is ours..." (3). There are two observations to be made about this assertion.

On the one hand, it demonstrates that the family has settled down. On the other hand, "The house on Mango Street is ours..." implies upward mobility secured in the ownership of property, of capital. The question of economics is linked to that of ideology. In other words, Cisneros seems to be saying, that for the Latinos to affirm themselves as subjects and a group with a voice in this United States, members of this group need to settle down, they need to clear a space for themselves rather than being highly itinerant. They need to come to terms with the exigency of their own identity.

Still on the ideological front, "the house" that is "ours" opens up to the issue of private property. As Terry Eagleton has argued in the context of his exegesis of ideology, private property "... is based upon a distinction between 'yours' and 'mine' which can be tracked in turn to a fundamental perceptual opposition between 'you' and 'me'". (Eagleton, 66) It is significant, therefore, that Cisneros should begin her narrative with this opening sketch on "The House on Mango Street". Since the "house" is "ours", our property, it becomes the basis for distinguishing between "us" and "them", "ours" and "theirs". The image of house is significant in another sense because it is located in space. Invariably, the Latinos need their own space in order to articulate their vision of themselves in a multi-ethnic United States. Again, a house

exists for someone. House in this sense becomes a metaphor for presence. But presence itself is not an ideal, not an abstract entity removed in an ethereal domain. Presence is the presence of someone, a subject who exists in relation to others - subjects in their own right. The house, though an object, acquires meaning because there is a subject who imbues it with sense for himself/herself. In other words, space here acquires value because someone "dwells" in it and configures it as such. This is because the meaning in itself is not an abstract and fixed value. Without their own space they will continue to live in a relation of interpellation with others. An upshot of the house that is ours is the family's recognition of the importance of education for the children.

Education is the engine of growth and Latinos are aware of this. *The Economist* reports the assertion made by Antonia Hernandez, the head of the Mexican-American Legal Defense Fund. Thus: "our growth means nothing if we remain under-educated. We Latinos have to become obsessed with education" But this can happen, Cisneros seems to say, when "we" settle down.

Even though the first sketch has set out to present to the reader the house that is "ours", its concern with movement, space and subjectivity situates Esperanza's account within the construction of Latino ethnic consciousness. On the surface, however, we are tempted to identify with the childlike glee that characterizes the presentation. Yet this is sheer for issues that have deep significance for the adult population.

The hinge between wonder and resonance is sutured by the question of becoming, of making a difference between actuality and expectation. It is the desire to be different that animates Esperanza's conclusion at the end of sketch number 1. She says: "I know then that I had to have a house. A real house. One I could point to". (5) We have explained that this mandates that we see house as a spatial limit from which becoming is possible.

In sketch number 12, the narrator takes up the question of identity from within the perspective of becoming. Cisneros's sense of identity is predicated not on a willingness to construct an ideal self, shorn of entanglement with the world. Her sense of identity is borne out of the contingency of her context, and the need to refashion those forces in the fulfillment of a desired end. In this regard, her sense of identity departs from any cleavage to an abstract humanism. It is not a sense of identity animated by an orphic quest of a lost ideal. It is proper to affirm that her sense of identity is fashioned out of what Michel Foucault has termed the "practices of self". The upshot of these is self-interrogation. As Jana Sawicki has shown, it is realized not by a penchant to self-discovery, but marked by self-refusal. (Sawicki, 288)

When we move from the house to the neighborhood, the same dynamic is maintained in terms of style and presentation and even content. Accordingly, the end of sketch number 1, sketch 12, and the penultimate sketch, number 43 entitled, "A House of My Own" (108) can be read and understood as a single dynamic. Sketch number 12 is simply cast in three short paragraphs and thirteen lines. Again the

reader may be deceived by the veneer of its surface simplicity and directness. It is only with care that we can discern that the juxtaposition of pronouns and the mention of the color brown are indices to a concern with identity. The following are the first and third paragraphs:

Those who don't know any better come into our neighborhood scared. They think we're dangerous. They think we will attack them with shiny knives. They are stupid people who are lost and got here by mistake...

All brown around, we are safe. But watch us drive into a neighborhood of another color and our knees go shakity-shake and our car windows get rolled up tight and our eyes look straight. (28)

The dominant point of view here is the first person plural, “we”. This is because the account is not about the family or the personal experience of Esperanza. She is here recounting a communal experience. She places “we” against “them”. The relationship between “we” and “they” is dictated by an inherent racial consciousness and apathy. “We” is designated as “brown”. The majority of the population on Mango Street is brown. Within the precincts of Mango Street “we are safe”. In other words, we are at home with people of our own color. The last two sentences point to the insecurity in this neighborhood borne out of an inexplicable suspicion of the *other*. This is one reason she desires to get out of Mango Street.

At the same time what we see in Cisneros is not a blind desire as such to escape the realities of experience. This illustrates

the aspect of her vision of identity which we have identified as self-refusal. The link to this is the use of the word "brown" towards the end of the last sketch. Sketch number sixteen takes up the subject matter of sketch 12 at a new level. While the former makes a distinction between us and them, mango Street and the outside world, sketch number 16 engages itself in the internal tension within mango Street itself. In this then she tends to interrogate the arbitrary designation of names and the tendency to close off discourse on the basis of fixed nomenclature and attitude.

Sketch 16 begins in the form of children innocently playing with names. In the process of the play it becomes obvious that these children are indeed expressing deep issues about the problem of meaning and its relationship with interpersonal and inter-ethnic relationship. Importantly, the children form a pair, namely: Esperanza and her sister, Nenny, and the other children, Rachel and her sister, Lucy. Thus we are told:

The Eskimos got thirty different names for snow, I say. I read it in a book.

I got a cousin, Rachel says. She got three different names.

There ain't thirty different kinds of snow, Lucy says. There are two kinds. The clean kind and the dirty kind, clean and dirty. Only two.

There are a million zillion kinds, says Nenny. No two exactly alike. Only how do you remember which one is which? (35)

The discussion begins with name for snow. Esperanza tell us that the Eskimos have thirty different names for it. Lucy's comment puts Esperanza's declaration in brackets. She says: "there ain't thirty different kinds..." Note that the initial problematic is with names and not with kinds. The question becomes: is there a difference between names and kinds? That is to say, when the Eskimos speak of snow, are they thinking of the same entity or different kinds? At this juncture, Rachel's piece of information becomes relevant. She says: "I got a cousin... She got three different names." Consequently, the three names do not translate into three cousins. It is Nenny who seems to have a conclusion. She says: "There are a million zillion kinds... No two exactly alike. Only how do you remember which one is which?"

Nenny's interjection creates a rupture in what ordinarily reads as a play, and turns it from wonder to resonance. This is because if we view this interaction between these children not simply as aesthetic configuration but as *techne* or symbolic act, it will bring to light not just the subjectivity of each child or concept. On the contrary, such a view will pave the way into the world that supports the creation of names and the replication of names into different kinds. As Nenny has reasoned, it is only within this world where names have coherence that we can "remember which one is which". It seems that the interaction between the children innocently reveals the underlying tension between potentiality and actuality, between what names represent and the kinds of configurations that could be derived from them. It is a tension because the difference between actuality (names) and possibility (kinds) may not be either self-evident or coincide

with essence. But more often than not it is more convenient to construct names and use them arbitrarily without much care about their essence.

It is within this context that Cisneros's novel serves two functions. It is essentially the voice of a definite ethnic consciousness in the United States. At the same time, it is also a backlash at the underlying politics that generate ethnic tension. Take for example, the word "brown" that features prominently in sketch number 12. It is used to stand for Mexican-Americans and by extension Latinos. In this regard, it marks a difference between whites, blacks on the one hand and Latinos on the other hand. Yet there are Latinos who are black. This will take us back to the arbitrariness of names. Sometimes the arbitrariness of words can become politically convenient. Yet in some contexts it can create problem. Again, Nenny says, "There are a million zillion kinds "meaning that the arbitrariness of language allows us to recreate words for diverse purposes. At the same time, it is one thing recreating words. Their essence must be gauged synchronically in the context of the user. Hence, "Only how do you remember which one is which?"

Through Nenny, therefore, Cisneros projects her readers to two important issues. There are words and there are users. Words have the power to ensnare at the level of wonder, trapping us in actuality, i.e., the Mango Street of Esperanza's experience with all its imperfections and contradictions. More fundamentally there are users who are subjects capable of making a definite sense out of received experience. It is this

kind of awareness that motivates Esperanza to make a difference towards the end of the novel.

There is also a linguistic dimension to this interaction between the four children. We will recall that the first line, “The Eskimos got thirty different names for snow”, is an allusion to a debate in modern linguistics on the relationship between language and thought. The debate stretches back to the works of linguists including Edward Sapir and Benjamin Lee Whorf. Sapir had argued as back as 1931 that language “is the shaper of ideas, the program and guide for the individual’s mental activity”. The upshot of this view is that language “constrains and presents thought”. (cf. Devitt and Sterelny, 174) The idealism implicit in this idea of language and thought is at odds with the method of new historicism as we see in the work of Greenblatt. This is because it is man in definite contexts that uses language in order to generate thought. Other positions against the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis often adopt the number of Eskimo words for snow vis-à-vis the English word in order to argue for the role of context and user in the determining meaning.

The issue for us is that of the significance of the allusion in the desire to construct identity for the Mexican-American, and a “house of my own”. Why has Cisneros chosen to introduce this allusion to deep question on the nature of language through the vision of children who are also girls? One thinks that this allusion reflects Cisneros’s resistance against all forms of essentialism and the monolithic conception of culture and identity. It is linked with her

feminism and her perception of the novel as form. Form for her is a process rather than a fixed totality.

The rest of the account in this sketch is equally significant. But it unfolds along this line. Esperanza and Rachel move away from the subject of “snow” to “clouds”. Esperanza says: “And clouds got at least ten different names”. (36) Nenny asks: “names for clouds?” Esperanza identifies a cumulus and we are told: “everybody looks up” Rachel passes a judgment: “cumulus is cute”. And as more cumulus appears, Nenny makes a song by matching the clouds with the names of children on Mango Street. But soon a quarrel breaks between Esperanza and Rachel. The quarrel is rooted in the way words are used to construct names. In this regard, Rachel’s imagination explodes as she compares the puffy appearance of a set of clouds with the face of Esperanza when she wakes up after falling asleep.

In the course of this quarrel they unleash insults at each other. As the quarrel deepens, Nenny goes on with her song matching up the passing clouds with the names of children on Mango Street. Nenny sings because the spoken word is just a name, signifier. It is the speaker who has filled the words with value and resonance. Take for instance, Rachel’s comparison between the puffy appearance of a set of clouds and the face of Esperanza when she wakes up from sleep. This observation is naturally true for most people. But Esperanza takes offence at this comparison. In the context of inter-ethnic and intra-ethnic relations words become injurious and offensive when people imbue them with such value.

On the surface the account in this sketch represents a set of children at play. Even at this level we see that play can turn into physical violence as when Esperanza summons a "broom to sweep away the trash". She does this because she has re-interpreted her "friend" as "trash". On deeper level of significance Cisneros uses this interaction between the children in order to congeal before us Nietzsche's representation of the fundamental relationship between language, power, and action in "On the Genealogy of Morals: A Polemic". The first essay, "Good and Evil, Good and Bad" leads to a distinction between two value systems good and bad producing a struggle between lord of the earth (the noble) and the wretched of the earth (*ressentiment*). The significant issue for us is that it language and its referential possibilities that make such distinction possible. Esperanza and her friend inflate words with value while Nenny sings because of the outright elusiveness of what a name is.

This indeterminacy of words and names becomes for Cisneros the *trace* or *track* through which she reconstructs a feminist discourse in her novel. Again the issue of resonance manifests stridently here. She begins with a familiar image, that of house. But the more we examine this image we discover its unfamiliarity. This reminds us of the difference between literature and history. While history gives us familiar things as they are, literature presents the same things under erasure, by revealing their unfamiliarity. In the rest of this paper I will describe the salient aspects of her feminism.

Although there are echoes of her feminism right from the beginning, sketch number 42 entitled, "A House of My Own"

(108) encapsulates this theme. This sketch is simply cast in two paragraphs and seven lines. Its poignant, passionate, and candid evocation of the deep-seated desire of a subject makes it a hinge point in this novel. Thus:

Not a flat. Not an apartment in back. Not a man's house. Not a daddy's. A house all my own. With my porch and my pillow, my pretty purple petunias. My books and my stories. My two shoes waiting beside the bed. Nobody to shake a stick at. Nobody's garbage to pick up after.

Only a house quiet as snow, a space for myself to go, clean as paper before the poem.

The significance of this passage is sutured in a dialectical relationship between space and gender. It is in space that we see not only the projection of a gender category as subject but also the annulling of another gender category. House is the space from which the woman makes herself present. But for this to congeal, house must be understood in her own terms and not as the traditional gaining of man as owner.

There are two kinds of gendered houses in "A House of My Own". There is that constructed on the authority of male: "...a flat... an apartment in back... a man's house... a daddy's". The common feature here in this constructed male space is the invisibility of woman and the visibility of man. The alternative house to be constructed will be on the authority of woman: "A house all my own". Note that it is only when Esperanza has declared "A house all my own" that

she can itemize and describe the paraphernalia of that house, and what kind of relationship it must nurture.

We can explain this by adopting the concept of interpellation. Interpellation is an integral thread in Louis Althusser's theory of ideology. First and foremost, Althusser (1971) distinguishes between the essential differences in the state apparatus, viz.: the Repressive State Apparatus (RSA) and the Ideological State Apparatus (ISA). With respect to the ISAs, in particular, they function to constitute individuals as subjects and their interpellation into position in the system of social relations. Accordingly, ideology interpellates individuals as subjects (170). In addition, the subject has the value either as a free subjectivity, a centre of initiative, or as a subjected being that submits to a higher authority and is, therefore, stripped of all freedom. The distinction between the two kinds of subjectivity does not simply amount to the difference between the protagonists and antagonist characters in a work of narrative fiction such as *The House on Mango Street*. We need to put an alert finger on the effectivity that governs such relations or what Althusser calls the "respective indices of effectivity." Such effectivity often results in the creation of specific structures of relations that often result in the transmission of various sign systems that are indeed traces of interests and sites of power. The important thing is to understand is how such effectivity functions in narrative fiction to produce individual characters as indices of specific authorities and interests.

This is because the novel transmutes the fundamental relationship in social totality so that we can see ourselves as

subjects in a dual sense. The novel is essentially a sign that is the symptom of a specific set of relationship whose effectively is in ideology. This implies that what we see in reality is not ideology but different patterns of *interpellation*, different patterns of concrete relations in ideology. With interpellation individuals are summoned or called forth as subject in either of its dual senses.

When we turn to sketch number 42 in *Mango Street* we see that the house constructed on the authority of the man, the woman is simply interpellated as an appendage of man. Since she is subject to man, her necessity, the accoutrement of her wardrobe, and even her relationships are in order to fulfill her exigency as subject in the sense of subjected. Note for instance, that when she has an apartment it is “in back”. Why not in front? It is in the back because within this constructed reality she is subjected to the man. Let me recall an Igbo proverb that says; “the sun will first shine on those who stand before it shines on those who sit under them”. The wisdom of this proverb is to designate two kinds of subjects. There are those who are standing, as it were, that have power and access to knowledge. And there are those who are sitting, that by the reason of their posture must become dependent or are subjected to others. The wisdom of this proverb resonates in the construction of identity politics. But it is even pertinent here as we read the salient aspects of Cisneros’s feminism.

Consequently, the essence of her feminism is borne out of the awareness that the Latino woman must make a difference by constructing for herself an alternatives space on the authority of the woman. In a way, this is anchored in the overall

impetus of feminism as a method. As Adrienne Rich has affirmed, feminism “is for women... an act of survival” (Rich, 167) Its ethos is animated by what is called “the ideology of the women’s sphere” which recognizes social reality on the basis of women’s special qualities and needs.

This brief representation of feminism may become counter-productive because of its essentialist framework. When presented in this generalist format it carries the undercurrent that women are the same. To eschew this essentialist image of womanhood we need to heed the call made by Julia Lesage that we must identify the peculiar condition of woman. She says: “we must understand different structures behind different women’s rage...” (Lesage, 420) The specificity of feminism for Sandra Cisneros crystallizes in the experience of Latinos in a multi-ethnic United States. And in line with the notion of identity espoused in her novel, feminism for her is not borne out of an act of reinvention but self-refusal. As we noted earlier, reinvention or self-discovery will unwittingly plunge the woman into an idealist humanist notion of man. Self-refusal for her entails being different from what she was at the beginning. Even though sketch number 42 forms the pivot of the formulation of this consciousness we can make a difference between Esperanza and her mother. It is in that difference that we can appreciate the importance of self-refusal and becoming for Esperanza.

In sketch number two entitled, “Hairs” Esperanza gives us a pleasant account about her family. It is also an attempt to represent the sense of community and the need for social bond. In the second paragraph she tells us about her mother.

On the surface it is a story of the warmth, love, and sweetness that pervades in this family. But when we clear the thicket of hairs we will see that this represents on of Cisneros's scathing attack on the patriarchal system in the Mexican-American community. I will cite at length for clarity:

But my mother's hair, my mother's hair, like little rosettes, like little candy circles all curly and pretty because she pinned it in pin curls all day, sweet to put your nose into when she is holding you, holding you and you feel safe , is the warm smell of bread before you bake it, it is the smell when she makes room for you on her side of the bed still warm with her skin, and you sleep near her, the rain outside falling and Papa snoring. The snoring, the rain, and Mama's hair that smell like bread. (7)

Note the image of mother. She is pretty, she is sweet and warm. She is adorable and hospitable. And she is mother and wife. But this is all about her. If we place this portion of "Hairs" side by side with the clamor for "A house of My Own" we will begin to perceive the interstice and contradiction in the image of this sweet and adorable woman. This is what clinches the difference: "... on her side of the bed... the rain outside falling and Papa snoring. The snoring, the rain, and Mama's hair that smells like bread". In short *mama is* because of Papa. Note that all the good things said about Mama in this sketch is subsumed under one act, that of Papa snoring. Mama may be "mother", indeed, but she has not constructed an alternative space on the authority of woman. She, like the Mexican-American woman of her

generation, is interpellated in the world (here the bed in Mango Street) created by the man. She is visible and yet invisible. This is the pitfall Cisneros has discerned that animates Esperanza's desire for "A house all my own". The last line, "... space... clean as paper before the poem" is indicative of a desire for becoming. The hallmark of this feminism is the need for the Mexican-American woman to recognize herself and clear a space for herself. "my books and my stories" entail that for the woman to *become* must include a readiness to tell her own stories and represent her own experience in the context of her identity and her culture vis-à-vis other stories of other identities in America.

To sum up then, I have set out with the assumption that no cultural object exists in a void. This entails that socially responsible criticism must open up to the embeddedness of cultural objects. Stephen Greenblatt's call for a new historicist method that will transcend the aura of wonder to the resonance of texts has formed our guiding thread in this paper. Because *The House on Mango Street* is deceptively simple and handy, we may fail to appreciate its underlying relationship to the construction of ethnic consciousness in a multi ethnic United States. We have insisted on the need to place the novel in the context of the struggle of American Latinos to come to terms with experience in the U.S. In this regard *Mango Street* becomes the narrative of agency and for identity.

By focusing on a selection of sketches, I have examined how the novel interrogates the issues of space, identity and feminism. The pattern that emerges is Cisneros's acute sense

of resistance against all forms of essentialism. This has paved the way for her to articulate a feminist consciousness borne out of the need to become different.

Cisneros's canvas may not be broad and extensive, her characters may not have solidity and depth in the sense of a new critical quest for round characters, yet in her novel art and life meet in a vibrant conjuncture. She captures the intensity of history and social forces in motion. The resonance of her novel lies in the fact that like all good works of literature; it takes us beyond the present level of contradiction. For her this movement is essentially an act of becoming.

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11. La Saintete Naufragee: Une Lecture Nietzscheenne de L'ascetisme dans L'aventure Ambigue de Hamidou Kane

Denis Ekpo

Une figure très énigmatique dans *l'Aventure Ambiguë* n'en finit pas d'intriguer le lecteur de ce récit. Il s'agit bien entendu de Maître Thierno, chef spirituel des Diallobés et directeur de l'école coranique, dite Foyer Ardent. Chez ce personnage enveloppé d'une étrange aura mystique se dessine une vie vouée totalement, semble-t-il, à la poursuite d'un idéal et d'un mode de vie peu conciliable avec l'existence terrestre et dont la signification s'avère assez problématique. En effet, nous sommes en présence d'un personnage dont la toute-puissance spirituelle et l'ombre mystique imprègnent tout le récit en commandant à la fois la macro-structure métaphysique et les micro-structures narratologiques de surface. A travers ce personnage envahissant et hors de commun, ne cesse donc de se poser le problème de la vraie signification et du vrai mécanisme existentiel de ce style particulier de vivre la foi religieuse qu'on appelle « l'ascétisme mystique » et qui se manifeste chez le Maître Thierno à travers un curieux ensemble de phénomènes de conduites et d'attitudes insolites et apparemment contradictoires. Que signifie en vérité l'idéal ascétique du Maître? C'est à dire, que signifient ses conduites extra-terrestres? A quoi renvoie tous ces comportements et attitudes négateurs, contradictoires, à savoir, une hostilité systématique à son corps, une haine farouche du monde, l'auto-macération, le fanatisme fondamentaliste, le terrorisme et le sadisme

pédagogiques ou le masochisme physique et spirituel? Est-ce la pure expression de la sainteté, la plus haute manifestation de l'essence divine de l'âme religieuse? Ou bien est-ce simplement une tartufferie psychophysiologique et morale destinée à combler une impuissance d'être ou à dissimuler une insidieuse volonté de puissance?

Telles sont les interrogations par lesquelles nous allons essayer de thématiser le problème de l'idéal ascétique tel qu'il se manifeste dans la représentation d'un romancier-penseur musulman d'Afrique. L'objectif qui soutend notre étude et partant, notre démarche méthodologique est double. D'abord nous allons essayer de comprendre le sens du phénomène ascétique en le ré-inscrivant dans la métaphysique islamique inspiratrice du récit, c'est-à-dire dans les schèmes du dessein idéologique général du texte. Ce qui ressortira à la fin de cette partie sera donc le sens et la signification de l'idéal ascétique tel qu'il est perçu par Kane. Dans un deuxième temps, nous allons opérer une mise en question systématique des présuppositions et des conceptualités de l'idéologie métaphysique génératrice de la dite interprétation religieuse du phénomène. Pour ce faire nous sortirons complètement de la métaphysique religieuse afin de problématiser la notion et le phénomène d'ascétisme dans les champs d'une philosophie critique capable de déconstruire les présuppositions et les schémas conceptuels producteurs de la signification religieuse du phénomène.

Commençons donc par le phénomène ascétique perçu, présenté et défendu par Kane dans le récit. Pour cela, il faut d'abord rappeler l'enjeu idéologique général du texte, qui,

d'après nous, et, en schématisant beaucoup, est le suivant: L'illustration et la défense, à travers une histoire fictive, des valeurs et des idéaux métaphysiques, intellectuels et moreaux de l'islam chez les Diallobés d'Afrique. Pour ce faire, Kane a créé une histoire et un héros dont toutes les péripéties sont destinées à illustrer la place incontournable d'Allah dans la vie et la mort du croyant Diallobé. Cet enjeu théocentrique, c'est-à-dire islamocentrique, de son livre semble avoir été mieux atteint non à travers l'histoire de son héros, mais grâce à cette mise en scène magistrale, à travers le personnage de Maître Thierno, de la pratique et la théorie du plus haut idéal de l'âme islamique, à savoir l'idéal de sainteté. Il semblerait que la solennité spirituelle et l'aura mystique avec lesquelles Kane présente le Maître Thierno et ses attitudes et conduites même les plus insolites et insensées constituerait la démonstration sans la moindre équivoque de la très haute signification religieuse que l'auteur attache au phénomène d'ascétisme mystique chez le Maître. Cette signification telle qu'elle ressort du texte de Kane est simple et claire: l'ascétisme mystique est l'expression de l'idéal de pureté et de l'aspiration à la sainteté chez le croyant musulman. Il constitue une manière privilégiée de vivre la foi destinée à ouvrir la voie d'accès à la béatitude divine et à l'union mystique avec Allah. Mais quel est le fondement, c'est à dire les pré-suppositions théoriques et la justification d'une telle interprétation du phénomène?

Bien entendu, vues sous l'angle idéologique de Kane, les attitudes et les conduites du Maître Thierno obéissent nécessairement aux principes islamiques précis. Bien que Kane ne nous le dise pas explicitement, il est évident que ces

principes ainsi que leur fondement théorique remontent au postulat métaphysique fondateur de toute la pensée mystique, selon lequel il y aurait deux mondes bien distincts: le monde apparent et le monde vrai. D'après cette métaphysique, ce monde-ci serait un monde apparent alors que le monde réel et vrai se trouverait dans l'au-delà. Pour accéder à celui-ci, il faudrait renoncer à ce monde apparent, c'est à dire le monde terrestre, nier sa réalité, à commencer par la réalité de son corps. A la lumière de cette doctrine, toutes les conduites hostiles du Maître à l'égard du réel, la violence qu'il fait à son corps et son auto-immolation progressive s'expliqueraient et se justifieraient par le besoin religieux impérieux de nier ce monde-ci afin de pouvoir affirmer le monde vrai. Animé donc d'un ardent désir de ce monde Où réside Dieu, le Maître s'insurge farouchement contre ce monde-ci, proclame son irréalité, son inutilité et la nécessité de le calomnier, de le haïr et de le rejeter. Aussi rejette-t-il toute perception du sens et du réel comme trompeuse et illusoire. Pour lui, n'est réel que Dieu, et Lui seul:

(IL) ne reconnaissait de réalité qu'à ce vers à quoi sa pensée a chaque instant s'envolait avec délice. (43).

Dans cette même veine, il se lève contre l'invasion des apparences, le règne de celles-ci au dépens de la 'réalité' c'est à dire Dieu.

Mon dieu vous avez voulu que vos créatures vivent sur la coquille solide de l'apparence. La vérité les noierait. Mais Seigneur de vérité, vous savez que l'apparence

prolifère et durcit. Seigneur, préservez-vous de l'exile derrière l'apparence. (95).

Dans ce rejet absolu et intransigeant du réel, il est frappant de retrouver la même négation du sens et du sensible qu'on rencontre chez certains penseurs grecs comme Parménide chez qui le monde empirique « est impitoyablement rejeté comme pure apparence et illusion » dont il est inutile de s'occuper puisqu'il n'est qu'un « monde menteur, inexistant ... une pure imposture de nos sens ». ¹

Mais contrairement à ce grec, le Maître ne se contente pas de nier le monde; Il veut aussi nier celui qui pense le monde: l'homme. Pour cette raison, il condamne toute exaltation de l'homme et prône l'oubli et la négation de soi de la part des fidèles.

Le Maître croyait profondément que l'adoration de Dieu n'était compatible avec aucune exaltation de l'homme... la foi est avant tout humilité, sinon humiliation. (33).

Cette attitude hostile à l'humanité et à la vie se manifeste encore plus clairement dans ses enseignements essentiellement ancrés sur la mort. En effet, ses imprécations morbides et ses discours en faveur du renoncement à la vie au profit de la mort vont jusqu'à effrayer et scandaliser la Grande Royale qui vient de voir en son cousin Diallo, la réussite de l'idéologie anti-vie du Maître. Ainsi dit-elle à son cousin:

Tu terrorises tout le pays les imprécations contre la vie. Le Maître cherche à tuer la vie en toi. (32).

Le paroxysme de ce refus de monde et de son hostilité systématique à la vie est sa négation du soi, ses tentatives de se réduire à rien :

Je ne suis rein... je vous supplie de sentir avec moi, comme moi que je suis rein. Seulement un écho minuscule qui prétendit, le temps de sa durée, se gonfler de la Parole... Prétention ridicule... Sentez-vous comme je suis l'écho vain. (131).

Au vu de toutes ces conduites peu habituelles, il est évident que l'idéal que poursuit le Maître est en dehors de ce monde terrestre; la vérité qu'il cherche réside dans un autre monde. En dehors de cette vérité de ce monde vrai, tous les intérêts de l'existence humaine lui apparaissent mesquins, étroits, bornés et inutiles. Nietzsche a bien vu cela quand il résume cet idéal exclusiviste ce l'ascète religieux en ces termes :

L'idéal ascétique a un but... à la poursuite ce but, il emploie les peuples, les hommes; il n'admet aucune autre interprétation, aucun autre but; il rejette, nie, affirme, confirme uniquement dans le sens de son interprétation.²

Grâce à tous ces attitudes, attributs et pratiques, le Maître passerait donc aux yeux de Kane pour l'incarnation de la sainteté religieuse de l'ascète mystique. En effet, par cette présentation nettement valorisante du phénomène, Kane semble nous inviter à accepter et même à partager toute l'idéalité métaphysique de l'ascétisme comme une réalité de la vie islamique. Car, en essayant très diligemment de donner au phénomène qu'il décrit une substance et en même temps

une idéalité métaphysiques supérieures, Kane cherche à nous faire voir l'existence, derrière les discours et les agissements apparemment insensés du Maître, de tout un système mental et spirituel supérieur et cohérent fondé sur une métaphysique sure et bien définie.

Cependant, peut-on accepter sans commentaire cette interprétation islamo-centrique du phénomène? D'abord, on ne doit pas oublier que tout mystique qu'il est, le Maître est avant tout un être- dans- le- monde et que même s'il nie avec une véhémence inouïe ce monde, il ne se définit pas moins par rapport à lui. Par conséquent, nous ne pouvons que ramener ses attitudes et poses mystiques sur terre afin de nous demander ce qu'elles signifient existentiellement. Et une fois qu'on est convaincu du caractère humain, trop humain du phénomène, on est droit de dé-sublimer un peu le mysticisme de la vie ascétique du maître et d'en faire une anthropologie humaine.

Pour ce faire, il faut sortir du cadre étroit de l'intention autoriale afin de pouvoir faire toute la lumière sur le phénomène. Par ailleurs la richesse polysémique d'une œuvre d'art - la différence qui travaille et traverse ses signes et qui interdit toute lecture moniste risquant de supprimer la fécondité signifiant de ceux-ci - nous impose la nécessité critique d'un déchiffrement autre et différent du texte de Kane. Une manière de faire ceci consiste à appliquer au phénomène une grille critique qu'on appelle la «critique généalogique», critique d'inspiration nietzschéenne. Qu'est-ce la critique généalogique? Conceptualisée par Nietzsche et réactualisée par Foucault, la critique généalogique, partant du

postulat que toutes les prétendues valeurs humaines ne sont que des mystifications idéales ou des pures mensonges, se veut une radicale « ré-évaluation des valeurs » à travers une mise à nu des interprétations que les gens ont imposées aux choses et qui sont devenues les bases de leurs pratiques culturelles. Critique essentiellement démystificatrice, elle cherche à remonter à l'origine de telle ou telle interprétation ou pratique culturelle afin de dévoiler, derrière leurs significations idéales, les artifices, les ruses et les motivations humaines qui les régissent. Elle cherche à démasquer les profondeurs et à réduire les parures solennelles de pratiques socioculturelles ou religieuses des gens à la nudité de la motivation psychologique ou physiologique à l'origine de ces pratiques. Pour le généalogiste, il n'y a pas de secret qui se cache derrière les choses ou bien:

*Les secrets des choses sont sans essence ou leur essence a été construite pièce à pièce à partir de figures qui lui étaient étrangères*³

Nous voulons faire pareille fouille généalogique de l'ascétisme du Maître afin de savoir ce qu'il en est exactement de sa profondeur ou hauteur céleste. Bien entendu, certains pourraient être choqués parce qu'on est en train d'illuminer par une critique profane, un phénomène mystico-religieux. Cependant, la tentation de commettre un tel sacrilège est d'autant plus forte que comme le dit Karl LOWITH résumant la pensée de Feuerbach,

L'essence première de la religion, c'est son essence humaine. La religion est une objectivation des besoins

*essentiels primitifs de l'homme, elle n'a pas un contenu propre et particulier.*⁴

Le mysticisme du Maître, aussi céleste qu'il puisse paraître est nécessairement enraciné dans son essence humaine existentielle. C'est donc en ce sens que nous allons sonder les fondements de l'idéal ascétique du Maître Thierno. Voyons donc une généalogie de son ascétisme.

Nietzsche, premier généalogiste de la Morale, dans son grand livre «La Généalogie de la Morale», a été le premier à déplacer l'idéal du prêtre ascétique de son piédestal céleste et à le ramener à son origine psychologique première. Au terme de ses fouilles généalogiques, il a, en effet, découvert que:

*«L'idéal ascétique a sa source dans l'instinct prophylactique d'une vie dégénéréscente qui cherche à se guérir, qui, par tous les moyens, s'efforce de se conserver, qui lutte pour l'existence; il est l'indice d'une dépression et d'un épuisement physiologique partiels, contre lesquels se raidissent sans cesse les instincts les plus profonds et les plus intacts de la vie, avec des inventions et des artifices toujours nouveaux. L'idéal ascétique est lui-même un de ces moyens: il est donc tout l'opposé de ce que les admirateurs de cet idéal s'imaginent-en lui et par lui la vie lutte avec et contre la mort, l'idéal ascétique est un expédient de l'art de conserver la vie»*⁵

Mais le prêtre ascétique ne se contente pas de se conserver par ce moyen, il en tire surtout sa raison d'être

ainsi que sa puissance. «Le prêtre ascétique tire de cet idéal non seulement sa foi, mais encore sa volonté, sa puissance, son intérêt. Son droit à la vie existe et disparaît avec cet idéal.»⁶

Quels moyens utilise-t-il le prêtre ascétique pour assurer à la fois sa conservation et sa puissance? D'après Nietzsche, il en use quatre à savoir, l'étouffement hypnotique de la sensibilité et de la faculté de souffrir; le stoïcisme intellectuel et moral; L'activité machinale et finalement la ruse⁷. On n'a aucune difficulté à faire entrer le Maître Thierno dans ce moule de prêtre ascétique tel que vient de nous le décrire Nietzsche. Nous avons déjà relevé certains des comportements paradoxaux du Maître: l'auto immolation progressive, le mépris de son corps, la violence faite à sa personne, les privations subies et l'auto affliction interminable. Or, ce qui étonne dans toutes ces conduites étranges, c'est que le Maître ne paraît pas en souffrir le moindres du monde; c'est aussi l'adresse avec laquelle il étouffe l'atroce souffrance physique qu'occasionne l'impératif catégorique de violenter son corps pour prier vingt-quatre heures sur vingt-quatre. Voilà comment l'auteur rend compte de cet amortissement hypnotique de la douleur:

« Le Maître avait du se résoudre...à ne tenir aucun compte de la pesante douleur qu'il ressentait au niveau des reins, chaque fois qu'il se courbait ou se dressait. Les articulations des genoux et des coudes fonctionnait encore, quoi que en craquant de façon incongrue. Paradoxalement, toute cette souffrance et cette sédition de son corps suscitaient dans l'humeur du Maître une

gaieté qui le laissait perplexe. Cependant, que la douleur le pliait, il avait peine à maintenir son sérieux, comme si le grotesque qu'il observait n'était pas le sien propre » (40).

Ce même stoïcisme corporel joue au niveau intellectuel et moral puisque le Maître en effet ne pense et ne vit que de ses nuages célestes:

« Ce Maître niait la rigidité de ses articulations, le poids de ses reins, niait sa case et ne reconnaissait de réalité qu'à ce vers Quoi sa pensée à chaque instant s'envolait avec délice » (43).

L'autre subterfuge qui permet au Maître de réussir son stoïcisme physico-intellectuel consiste à détourner toutes ses souffrances physiques et psychiques et les dissoudre dans l'activité machinale de la prière:

« Nul au monde, à coup sur, ne s'était pas, son existence durant accroupi autant de fois que le Maître des Diallobés car nul n'avait prié autant que lui. Le grand age et les rhumatismes avaient fait de ce geste chaque jour encore vingt fois répété, cette gymnastique grotesque et pénible que l'assistance émue suivait en haletant » (130).

Comment le Maître obtient-il l'allégement de toute sa souffrance en se donnant à cet exercice machinal de la prière? Par un effet psychologique proche de l'hypnotisation et

l'oubli de soi: Nietzsche diagnostique cette action hypnotique comme suit:

« l'allégement provient de ce que l'intérêt du patient est fortement détourné de la souffrance-que constamment l'activité et encore l'activité, occupe la conscience et n'y laisse par conséquent que peu de place à la souffrance... L'activité machinale et tout ce qui s'y rapporte-la régularité absolue, l'obéissance ponctuelle et passive, l'habitude prise une fois pour toutes, l'emploi complet du temps, une certaine discipline permise et voulue d'«impersonnalité», d'oubli de soi, d'«incuria sui» - Combien radicalement et délicatement le prêtre ascétique a su employer tout cela dans la lutte contre la douleur »⁸

Mais on se demande, dans le cas du Maître Thierno, dans quel but, dans quel intérêt, le prêtre ascétique s'impose-t-il tous ces supplices? Quel est le sens de son auto-punition permanente? Contrairement l'intention autoriale de Kane, l'auto négation apparente du Maître ne renvoie pas nécessairement à un sublime celeste mais sert peut-être simplement un intérêt psychologique et existentiel précis, à savoir, l'affirmation occulte de sa puissance et la jouissance secrète des extases voluptueuses. Car, il faut en convenir, toutes ces négations, tous ces paradoxes que le Maître lance à la vie, dissimulent une quantité d'affirmations subtiles, sournaises, d'autant plus efficaces qu'elles sont occultes.

Qu'est-ce que c'est que ce mépris de soi et de son corps, cette existence qui se veut totalement désincarnée, cette haine du

monde et de la vie qu'une vanité suprême, peut-être une auto-divination déguisée?

Qu'est-ce que c'est que cette aspiration systématique au repos hivernal, au sommeil hivernal, cette volonté au néant permanent qu'une volupté secrète, une joie de vivre, une jouissance extatique hors du commun? Lorsqu'il se déclare « je ne suis rien, je vous supplie de sentir avec moi, comme moi que je ne suis rien » (p. 131) n'est-ce pas la une vanité et une volonté de puissance cherchant à se dissimuler derrière cette auto-négation mystique prétentieuse et purement verbale? Car ce Maître rusé sait qu'il est tout aux yeux de tout le monde et il s'en réjouit profondément. Néanmoins, grâce à des tours de passe-passe mystiques artificiels il veut affirmer le contraire. De la même façon, son masochisme, sa cruauté envers soi-même, sont liés directement à la jouissance secrète et inavouée qu'il ressent en se violant et en martyrisant son corps.

Parallèlement, comme nous l'avons déjà dit, le but ultime de l'idéal ascétique du prêtre était l'exercice occulte d'une puissance réelle. Le Maître Theirno, en tant que modèle unique du désir religieux de ces gens, est le symbole parfait de la grande puissance exercée d'une manière hypocrite et dissimulée par le prêtre ascétique. Comment se manifeste-t-elle la puissance du Maître? Subrepticement mais très efficacement. Pour cela, il réunit en sa personne dans une unité formidable et inébranlable, ce que Nietzsche appelle:

*« la cruauté de l'ours blanc, la patience froide du tigre et surtout l'astuce du renard »*⁹

Pour ce qui est de la « cruauté de l'ours blanc » du Maître, le lecteur est témoin du terrorisme sadique qu'il érige en méthode d'enseignement – ses violences inouïes, sa brutalité de fauve, ses déchaînements sanguinaires inattendus sur ses élèves sont là pour en témoigner. Qui plus est, ses instruments de torture – bâches enflammées verges, etc.... et son insensibilité de pierre à la souffrance, sont vraiment effrayants. Bien sur il ne manque pas d'explications mystico-religieuses de ces brutalités mais selon notre optique généalogique, nous n'y voyons qu'une volonté de puissance morbide longuement refoulée, qui vient de trouver un exutoire voluptueux dans la cruauté et la brutalité non seulement envers soi mais surtout envers les autres. Mais fort heureusement, la volonté de puissance du Maître ne s'exprime pas que par la brutalité, car notre Maître dispose de moyens plus subtils et plus efficaces pour exercer sa forte puissance sur les Diallobés; ces moyens sont la patience et la ruse.

En premier lieu, nous savons très bien que le Maître tire un immense pouvoir de son idéal ascétique surtout à travers ce qu'il signifie, lui, aux yeux de ses crédules sujets, à savoir, le médiateur entre l'homme et Dieu, le modèle unique de leurs désirs religieux. La foi en lui, le Maître soutient leur foi en Dieu mais est surtout une garantie du salut et du paradis. A cette position mystique privilégiée et hors du commun, sont livrées totalement et sans défense, les consciences de tous les Diallobés et les gens des environs. Ainsi devenu gardien du bien spirituel de son peuple, le Maître jouit d'une puissance immense et indiscutable; son rayonnement s'étend partout et

il devient le premier personnage, en sa qualité de directeur des consciences, du pays Diallobé et au-delà.

« Des maîtres venant des contrées les plus lointaines le visitaient périodiquement et repartaient édifiés. Les plus grandes familles du pays se disputaient l'honneur de lui envoyer leurs garçons ». (18).

Même l'esprit réaliste et très mondain qu'est la Grande Royale reconnaît la toute puissance du Maître en tant que conscience du pays: *« Nul n'a sur le pays, un empire qui égale le vôtre »*, (p.45) dit-elle au Maître. Aussi, de l'avis de tout le monde, la puissance du Maître est-elle presque absolue. Cependant, notre Maître n'entend pas exercer une telle puissance d'une manière païenne et mondaine – il préfère le faire plus subrepticement et par dissimulation. Ainsi, au lieu de s'avouer la puissance que tout le monde lui reconnaît, le Maître s'en défend ou feint de le faire, ou se le cache. Réagissant à ce que la Grande Royale vient de lui dire à propos de son immense pouvoir:

« Le Maître sentait la terreur le gagner doucement à mesure que cette femme parlait. Ce qu'elle disait, il n'avait jamais osé se l'avouer très clairement, mais il savait que c'était la vérité » (45).

Pour feindre de se cacher cette vérité, il se réfugie tout de suite dans l'auto négation et le refus:

« Je ne connais pas....Je ne me connais pas et c'est moi qu'on choisit de regarder. Car on me regarde. Tous ces

malheureux m'épient et tels des caméléons de colorent à mes nuances. Mais ne je veux pas: je ne veux pas » (46).

Pour le lecteur attentif cependant, un tel démenti est peu croyable. Qui plus est, par sa réaction émotive « le maître sentait la terreur le gagner doucement » - le Maître a déjà trahi sa mauvaise foi et son hypocrisie. Car cette fuite magique dans une terreur feinte n'est que flagrant délit de son hypocrisie typiquement sacerdotale.

Cette manière hypocrite mais très rusée d'exercer sa puissance se manifeste le plus clairement au moment de la crise politico-culturelle des Diallobés, occasionnée par la querelle entre les partisans entre l'école nouvelle et l'école ancienne. Auréolé de son autorité spirituelle, le Maître est automatiquement celui qui a le dernier mot dans les affaires humaines des fidèles. Conséquemment, au moment de la crise, c'est au Maître qu'ont eu recours les gens de Diallobé pour trancher cette difficile question qui les divise tant. Or, nous savons déjà son fondamentalisme fanatique, son monisme intransigeant notamment le fait que pour lui, la seule réalité est Dieu. Dans la logique de cette métaphysique personnelle totalement théocentrique, on s'attendrait à ce que le Maître n'ait pas la moindre hésitation à trancher contre l'école nouvelle, simple apparence illusoire. Erreur. Le Maître refuse tout simplement de dire ni oui, ni non à l'école nouvelle. Pourquoi ne dit-il pas oui ou non? C'est que fin prêtre ascétique, le Maître a très vite perçu les risques d'un exercice aussi direct et linéaire de son pouvoir car, il sait que s'il intervenait directement, en cas d'échec, il subirait une atteinte au statut d'infailibilité dont il jouit auprès de ses

fidèles. En effet, sentant que la Grande Royale a déjà pris une position définitive en faveur de l'école nouvelle et par conséquent, s'il prend une position contraire, il risque d'être désavoué par cette puissante personnalité, le Maître, pour éviter l'éventualité d'une pareille mise en cause de son autorité, se réfugie dans cette ruse géniale qui consiste à ne pas prendre position pour ou contre. Voici comment le Maître entend tirer le maximum de bénéfice de cette attitude: En raison de la confiance absolue que lui vouent les Diallobé, le Maître sait que son refus de se prononcer laisserait tout de suite planer le doute et l'inquiétude sur les esprits de ses fidèles, une situation qui permet au Maître de retrouver le plein exercice sournois et les puissances occultes, de son pouvoir. Pour mieux réussir ce tour de force, le Maître joue successivement sur le silence, l'indifférence et les dérobades. Par ses silences bien étudiés et son indifférence simulée, le Maître sait très bien qu'il tient les Diallobés encore plus étroitement sous son emprise. Lorsqu'il décide de parler, il le fait seulement par des dérobades. Ainsi, au lieu de donner une réponse directe à la question posée, il esquisse, se réfugie dans des litotes ou des paraboles hermétiques destinés à semer l'inquiétude dans l'esprit de ses auditeurs et du pays Dialloé en général. A la question de savoir si l'envoi des enfants à l'école nouvelle serait une atteinte à la foi religieuse des Diallobés, voici le type de réponse hermétique que le Maître formule:

« Madame, Dieu a clos la sublime lignée de ses envoyés avec notre prophète Mohammed, la bénédiction soit sur lui. Le dernier messager nous a transmis l'utime parole

où tout a été dit. Seuls les insensés attendent encore » (40).

Puis,

« Ne me demandez pas ce qu'il faut faire demain parce que je ne sais pas » (21-22).

Ces dérobades et ces subterfuges rhétoriques qui lui permettent de mieux affirmer, exercer son emprise sur les consciences, le Maître lui-même, les reconnaît quand il avoue, peut-être par mégarde « l'espièglerie de sa pensée »

« Le Maître réprima un sourire. Généralement, l'espièglerie de la pensée l'amusait » (43).

L'auteur résume cette manière habile d'exercer à puissance sur les âmes en les tenant en haleine avec ces mots:

« Le Maître eut pu dire oui, c'était facile et le pays eut explose de joie. Il lui eut été facile de dire non et le pays eut obéi. Il ne dirait rien. Les hommes du Diallobé sentaient le drame et pensaient à leur Maître avec compassion et reconnaissance à la fois » (95).

Voilà en effet comment le Maître à la fin, a gagné: en ne disant rien, il a, en réalité, accompli tout; il a réaffirmé sa toute puissance inviolable sur son peuple. Quelle manière habile d'exercer un pouvoir absolu! Sa ruse repose essentiellement sur la vieille tactique de la puissance

sacerdotale que René Girard appelle: « les préceptes delà mystique souterraine »

Notre saint Maître a vite compris que moins il dit et plus il se dérobe, plus les Diallobé continueront à se tourmenter et à solliciter sa sagesse. Et il a eu raison.

*« Ne demandez pas et l'on vous donnera; ne cherchez pas et vous trouverez; ne frappez pas et l'on vous ouvrira. »*¹⁰

L'autre ruse de pouvoir du Maître consiste à exploiter les notions de péché et de culpabilité pour empoisonner les consciences de ses fidèles afin de les mieux réduire à son emprise autocratique. Les cas les plus parlants où cette tactique a réussi sont le Chevalier et son fils Diallo. Nous avons déjà dit que si le Maître a refusé de donner son avis ou s'il a préféré, donner un avis hermétique, c'était pour jeter les Diallobés dans le doute et la mauvaise conscience de telle sorte que, craignant d'avoir offensé Dieu, ils puissent revenir sur leur décision d'envoyer leurs enfants à l'école nouvelle. C'est ce qui se passe précisément avec le Chevalier qui, rongé de culpabilité et de mauvaise conscience, décide de retirer son fils d'Europe. Mais le plus dramatique est le cas de ce fils, Diallo, à qui le Maître a réussi avec son idéologie aliénante mais puissante de péché, à enlever toute joie de vivre, du début à la fin. Si Diallo s'est perdu dans des ratiocinations et auto-accusations paralysantes au lieu d'agir pour vaincre son dilemme, c'est que l'ombre du Maître, les fantasmes effrayants que lui a inculqués le Maître, le plongent dans une mauvaise conscience et une culpabilité

dévastatrice et empêchant toute reprise rationnelle de soi et de sa situation. Même avant le départ de Diallo pour l'Europe, le Maître a déjà réussi, en brandissant l'arme du péché et d'autres sortilèges effrayants de l'enfer, a jeté précocement le jeune Diallo dans la mauvaise conscience de telle sorte qu'à six ans, Diallo en vient à rougir de sa bonne naissance et de son statut de patricien. En compagnie de ses camarades plébéiens, il a honte d'être ce qu'il est!

Quel est l'enjeu politico-culturel de ce jeu mystico-religieux de sainteté? Thomas Melone a traité le Maître Thierno de névrosé.¹¹ Mais pour moi, ce qu'on peut reprocher au Maître, ce n'est pas tellement son sado-masochisme, ses brutalités ou les ruses terrestres de son pouvoir mystique, mais la façon violemment anti-humaine dont il apprécie et juge notre existence terrestre et tout ce qui s'y rattache: la nature, l'homme, les sphères entières de la vie mondaine. C'est aussi les conséquences de ce jugement pour le destin historique du peuple Diallobe. Pour le Maître, la vie corporelle, c'est à dire la vie dans ce monde est une erreur, un péché à laver. L'homme n'est à ses yeux qu'une « *misérable moisissure de la terre* » (p.14) D'où ses imprécations incessantes contre l'homme, sa vie et d'où son exaltation de la mort. Nietzsche disait déjà que pour l'ascète « *la vie est le chemin de l'erreur où il faut revenir sur ses pas jusqu'au point l'on était parti; Ou bien une méprise que l'on doit réfuter* »¹² Une telle appréciation aussi monstrueuse et totalement hostile à la vie qu'on retrouve chez Thierno, fait de ce maître un misanthrope nihiliste qui s'ignore. Son nihilisme est d'autant plus redoutable qu'il est sournois et camouflé dans des poses grandioses et des attitudes de sainteté trompeuses. Tant qu'il

reste le Maître des Diallobès, tant qu'il existe en misanthrope morbide et en ennemi farouche de la vie, il est impossible aux gens de ce pays de s'affranchir de son emprise morbide afin de revenir à la vie réelle et accepter le monde pour le transformer. Il a fallu effectivement attendre sa disparition pour que son successeur plus jeune et plus ouvert puisse revenir sur cette vision mortuaire des choses pour permettre l'entrée dans le monde réel et l'ouverture de l'horizon existentiel des Diallobés.

Dans l'ensemble, en montrant comment le prétendu projet idéologique du livre de Kane (défense des valeurs et idéaux ascétiques islamiques) est fissuré miné et subverti de l'intérieur par la différence et les ruses sémiotiques du texte lui-même, nous croyons avoir œuvré dans le sens de la richesse polysémique – c'est à dire la signification plurielle – d'un grand texte africain dont le sens ne pourrait jamais être épuisé ni par l'intention autoriale ni par les positions souvent apologétiques de la critique officielle.

Notes and References

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12. The Racinian Tragedy in Zulu Sofola's *Wedlock of the Gods*

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Introduction

It may serve as a significant prelude to this paper by amplifying the view that the concept of tragedy is not new to man. Indeed, its presence in the affairs of man has been widely acknowledged, right from the beginning of time. To buttress this point, we shall recall, no matter how briefly, the tragic situation of the Biblical Adam and Eve (the first man and his wife) in the Garden of Eden. At the beginning, Adam and Eve were created and recognized by God, who guaranteed them unparalleled happiness. Later, they had a reversal of their condition for disobeying God. They both fell from grace to grass because of their inability to control their passion and dominate their flesh. On the one hand, Eve could not control her passion for the forbidden fruit. She desired it and wanted to possess it. Indeed, she possessed it. On the other hand, Adam could not tame his passion to please Eve and satisfy her satanic demand. Consequently, he too had a share of the forbidden fruit. They both fell from their high-horse and were chased out of the Garden of Eden as their punishment for disobedience to God. They both received pains and sufferings as their reward. Their condition clearly has all the trappings of a tragedy. As we have earlier noted, this Biblical reference is only intended to reinforce the position that man has been living with tragedy right from the

beginning of time. It is in the light of this position that Steiner (1963:3) observes that,

All men are aware of tragedy in life. But tragedy as a form of drama is not universal. Oriental art knows violence, grief, and the stroke of natural or contrived disaster; the Japanese theatre is full of ferocity and ceremonial death. But that representation of personal suffering and heroism which we call tragic drama is distinctive of the Western tradition.

The most striking and note-worthy point in this observation is that although the concept of tragedy is known to men of all land and clime, its dramatic treatment of tragedy appears in different forms in different countries. Steiner's position is not only apt, but also unassailable. It must be added that tragedy in literature became more evident in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. And the greatest writers of tragedy include William Shakespeare, Euripides, Sophocles and Racine. Before I close this line of argument, it must be stressed that Greek writers are generally acknowledged as the greatest writers of tragedy.

Since we are concerned in this paper with the Racinian tragedy in Zulu Sofola's *Wedlock of the Gods*, it may be in place at this point to introduce, no matter how briefly, Jean Racine and his tragedy. Jean Racine (1639 – 1699) was a seventeenth century French playwright, who has been regarded as the monarch of tragic drama in the seventeenth century. He is too frequently compared with Pierre Corneille and William Shakespeare. Racine lived in Port Royal and

studied Greek literature. His genius crystallized in a series of tragic masterpieces which include *Phedre*, *Britannicus*, *Iphigenie*, *Athalie*, *Berenice*, *Alexandre* and *Andromaque*. Indeed, he can be rightly described as the supreme writer of French classical tragedy. On his literary influence, Steiner (1963:76) remarked that Racine tended to identify himself with the Greek tragedians, particularly with Sophocles and Euripides, because he felt that their theatre had possessed a unique dignity. The question which needs to be addressed at this point is: what constitutes the Racinian tragedy? According to Brereton (1973:265), Racine's tragedy grew out of Romanesque tragedy, whose major concern is the 'realness' of the situation that is being portrayed, not realism. According to Radford et al. (1988:59), "Tragedy is for Racine the working out of an inexorable series of events leading to a foreseeable catastrophe." In Racinian tragedy, amour-passion is considered as a distinctive feature. In his tragedy, the characters, "unlike those of Corneille, are not in control of their passions" (Radford, et al. 1988: 56). His heroes and heroines, torn apart by violent emotions, often move inexorably towards disaster. It is in the same light that Reid (1976:512) has observed that in Racine's plays, love and women are subversive, anti-social forces, leading not to heroism but to neglect of duty, misery, and crime. Succinctly put, Racine's tragic characters, as Brereton (1973:272) puts it,

... are dominated by a superior force against which neither personal attempts at self-assertion nor man-made (i.e. social) codes of conduct are of any avail.

It must also be noted that in Racinian tragedy, love and death are interchangeable; both consume men with similar rapacity. Before we close this line of argument, it may be in place to recall another remarkable and illuminating observation on Jean Racine's tragedy. According to Pocock (1973: 177),

It is usually said that the qualities characteristic of Racine – those by which his plays differ from other men's, and in particular from Corneille's – are simplicity, neat construction, and concentration on love.

For a better understanding of the concept of the Racinian tragedy, it may suffice to provide a synopsis of two of his best tragedies. The two plays are *Phedre* which Steiner (1963: 84) has described as "the keystone of French tragic drama" and *Andromaque*. *Phedre* is a play built around Phedre, the wife of Thesee. Phedre is pathetically and secretly in love with Hippolyte, her stepson. Thesee travels and there is a rumour that he is dead. Phedre, who has all along been struggling to conceal her love for Hippolyte, her stepson drops her mask. She declares her love to Hippolyte. The latter, out of respect for his father, refuses Phedre's overtures. As the play continues to unfold, Thesee returns to his palace. Gripped with the fear that Hippolyte may reveal the secret to his father, Phedre plans a mischief. She accuses her stepson of attempting to make love to her in her husband's absence. Hippolyte's defence is rejected by his father who sends him into exile, where he dies a gory death. Towards the end of the play, Phedre is, on the point of death and against her will, propelled into confession of love for, Hippolyte, her stepson. She takes her own life through poison

over the body of her stepson. Thesee regrets his action and is left to mourn his son. It must be noted that the theme of love is the dominant theme in this play. The love here is unlawful love. Phedre's love for her stepson is uncontrollable and stands between her and her sense of dignity and honour. It is this love which consumes and eventually leads her and Hippolyte to destruction. In *Andromaque*, a play which has its roots in Greek mythology, it is the same theme of uncontrollable love which consumes the lovers and destroys them at the end. Andromaque, the widow of Hector, is a captive in the palace of Pyrrhus. Pyrrhus loves Andromaque who refuses to love him back. For the love of Andromaque, Pyrrhus neglects Hermione, his wife. Infuriated by this development, Hermione employs Oreste who has been in love with her to assassinate Pyrrhus in order to win her love. Oreste assassinates Pyrrhus. But this assassination becomes unbearable to Hermione. She takes her own life over the body of Pyrrhus. Oreste is consequently afflicted with insanity. These two plays are typical of Racinian tragedy where love, not only leads to neglect of duty, misery and crime, but also consumes and destroys the lovers. We shall now turn to Zulu Sofola's *Wedlock of the Gods* to examine the extent to which it reflects the Racinian tragedy.

Racinian Tragedy in *Wedlock of the Gods*:

It is essential for the reader to possess some knowledge of the general sweep of the action of the play before any attempt can be made to interpret the play in greater detail. To this end, we observe that Zulu Sofola's *Wedlock of the Gods* is built around the theme of death and mourning in the

traditional African society. The heroine of the play is Ogwoma, a widow. When Adigwu, Ogwoma's husband, dies, Ogwoma is obliged by tradition to mourn her husband for three months, during which she must not have her bath, let alone taking in a man. But Ogwoma shows her disrespect for this tradition because of her uncontrollable passion. She is already pregnant for Uloko, the man with whom she has been in love and had wanted to marry instead of Adigwu who was imposed on her. Odibei, her mother-in-law, suspecting foul play in Ogwoma's comportment, directs her, through supernatural means, to die through poison for not only failing to mourn her husband, but also for loving Uloko. Enraged by the death of his love, Uloko reacts violently by first killing Odibei and then committing suicide by the side of Ogwoma's corpse.

Since the main thrust of this paper is to argue that Zulu Sofola's *Wedlock of the Gods* has some remarkable characteristics of a Racinian tragedy, we shall start our analysis by observing that although the play is set in a primitive African society and has its roots in the ritual of death and mourning, its strong concentration on love is reminiscent of Racinian tragedies. Indeed, the tragedy in this play is predicated significantly on love. And like in typical Racinian tragedies, the love in this play is the uncontrollable and tragic love which leads the heroine to neglect of duty, misery and crime. The love in this play is between Ogwoma and Uloko. Ogwoma expresses her deep love for Uloko in the following moving lines:

*Oh God, Uloko has blinded me.
I go to the market,
It is Uloko I see in every stall;
I go to the farm,
It is Uloko in every tree;
The wind blows,
It is his hands that touch me;
The birds sing,
It is his voice I hear;
Oh God, his child moves in me. (10).*

It is in the light of this outpouring of uncontrollable emotions that Austen-Peters (1995:47) aptly describes the heroine as a woman “dominated and overwhelmed” by love. From this moment onwards, we are not left in doubt that Ogwoma is irrevocably and pathetically heading for doom.

In the manner of Phedre and Andromaque, Ogwoma clearly lacks the ability to control her wild passion. Like a typical Racinian tragic character, Ogwoma’s uncontrollable and tragic passion sets her on the path of self-destruction, right from the beginning of the play. She is pathetically torn between her tragic passion and her sense of duty and honour. According to her tradition, Ogwoma has the obligation to mourn her husband for three months without meeting a man. She would have been accorded full honour if she had complied with the specifications of the tradition. But her uncontrollable passion for Uloko makes her neglect this aspect of her duty. She becomes an adulterous woman. To make matters worse, she is already carrying Uloko’s baby in her womb. Her professed love for Uloko makes her lose her

sense of dignity and honour as a wife. It also incriminates and pitches her against Odibei, Adigwu's mother. Ogwoma's misbehaviour provokes Odibei to outrage. The latter is now prepared to avenge the death of her son, for whom she holds Ogwoma responsible. She gives free expression to her mind in the following scene:

NNEKA Was it for the happiness and health of my daughter that you were pouring these evil medicines?
OTUBO It is enough.

NNEKA No, it is not enough. People are born and people die. Odibei will not ...

ODIBEI No. Adigwu did not die as other people die.

OTUBO This will not do. Anger leads nowhere. We cannot set fire to a whole house just to kill one rat because when the house is on fire the rat runs into the bush.

ODIBEI The rat will not run into the bush this time. I am ready. (To NNEKA) Tell your rat that there is no bush she will run to that Odibei will not enter. (50)

From this scene, it becomes clear that Odibei will leave no stone unturned in her bid to avenge the death of her son. Towards the end of the play, we watch with pity as the heroine meets her tragic death. She is summoned and directed to die by drinking poison.

Ogwoma is not the only character that is portrayed as a typical Racinian tragic character in *Wedlock of the Gods*. Uloko is also portrayed as a typical Racinian tragic character. Uloko's love for the heroine, not only blinds and overwhelms him, but also pitches him against his society. We cannot but watch with pity and utter surprise as he, dominated by this love, flaunts the tradition of his people by paying the heroine series of illegal visits during the period of mourning. Uloko's love for Ogwoma eventually makes him a criminal and indeed an adulterer. This love is couched by the playwright in a beautiful language which is reminiscent of Racine's passion for poetry and beautiful language. We quote the language in detail:

*Your love will now come with you.
Ours is the wedlock of the gods.
Together we shall forever be lightning
And thunder – inseparable!
Our love shall live forever;
Your light to keep it aglow,
My thunder to demolish all obstacles.
We shall leave this cursed place;
We shall ride on the cotton of the heavens;
We shall ride to where there is peace!
The rain shall cool our sweats and pains;
The sun shall dry our tears;
The stars shall crown our heads;
The night shall hide and protect us.
Over and around we shall together roam;
Beautifying as we impress. (55-56).*

It is this love which spells doom for Uloko. Indeed, it hastens him to his tragic end. His love for Ogwoma constitutes for him a supernatural force against which he is helpless. As the play continues to unfold, Uloko, like Oreste in Racine's *Andromaque*, turns a murderer in order to satisfy his love. When he is informed of the death of the heroine, Uloko is overwhelmed, infuriated and driven by his passion to murder Odibei whom he holds responsible for the tragedy. To complete the tragedy, Uloko takes his own life in order to join his love on the other side of the great divide.

For the discerning reader, the aspect of fatalism in this play cannot be overlooked. Like in the relationships between Racinian tragic lovers, fatalism looms large in the love between Uloko and Ogwoma. Right from the start of the play, it seems that the gods have decreed against the holy wedlock of the two lovers. It will be recalled that Ogwoma intended to marry Uloko, but instead, she was forced by her parents to marry Adigwu in order to provide medical care for her sick brother. When Adigwu, considered as an obstacle eventually dies of a swollen stomach, it is the expectation of the two lovers to solemnize their marriage. But that is not to be. The two lovers try to realize their dreams, but their efforts continue to be checkmated. The more they try, the more they drift towards catastrophe. Here, to borrow the words of Niyi Osundare (1980: 105), we have “an archetypal tragic situation where every step taken to circumvent the wish of the gods ironically leads towards its ultimate fulfillment.”

Another remarkable feature of *Wedlock of the Gods* which reminds the reader of Racine's dramaturgy is Sofola's

controlled artistry. She carefully selects her materials and consciously leaves out unnecessary details in the play. In the manner of Racinian tragedies, the play commences at a moment of crisis. At the beginning of the play, we are informed that Adigwu, the heroine's husband is dead and that the heroine is already in the state of mourning. Again, we are already aware that Uloko and Ogwoma have been meeting each other despite the restrictions placed on such meetings. It is this decision to start the play at the peak of the action that helps the writer to, not only respect the Unity of theme, but also enables her to achieve a quick and steady resolution of the play.

Conclusion

To conclude this paper, it may be in place to re-emphasize the point that Zulu Sofola's *Wedlock of the Gods*, a play which is deeply rooted in the ritual of death and mourning, portrays some remarkable features of the Racinian tragedy. Like the Racinian tragedies such as *Phedre* and *Andromaque*, *Wedlock of the Gods* portrays love as not only a supernatural force, but also as a tragic passion which consumes and destroys the lovers. Throughout the play, Ogwoma, the heroine and Uloko, her lover, are portrayed as lovers who are marked out to be destroyed by the gods. Like Racinian tragic characters, they are seen to be overwhelmed and consumed by their love for each other. While Ogwoma can be compared to Phedre in Racine's *Phedre*, Uloko can be compared to Oreste in Racine's *Andromaque*. It must be noted however that although we are arguing that *Wedlock of the Gods* has the trappings of the Racinian tragedy, we are not in any way

trying to belittle the importance of the play. Obviously, the play deserves to be appreciated as an original work. Succinctly put, the play rests on its own merits. The play is a clear demonstration of the writer's creative ability. In it, the playwright has skillfully exploited and portrayed an African reality which can be rightly described as a tragedy.

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13. The Influence of James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* on George Lamming's *In the Castle of my Skin*

Teresa U. Njoku

“... but a writer lives, not by the extent to which he culminates the past but by the extent to which he fertilizes the future.” - Christopher Gillie.

James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* is one of those novels that have far-reaching effects on the twentieth century novel form. This influence has been most noticeable in George Lamming's *In the Castle of My Skin*². However, the influence of Joyce's *The Portrait* on *In the Castle* “is not something which reveals itself in a single concrete manner but it must be sought in many different manifestation”³. Though we know that art is nomadic, and that influence cannot be measured quantitatively, the influence of *The Portrait* on *In the Castle* can be seen in the projection of the hero, in the images, symbols and style used, and in the way the work is presented.

The reasons for such influence are not difficult to perceive. Barbades and Ireland seem to share similar political and cultural experiences. Each of the two novels exposes colonial presence and repression, and subtly condemns British imperialism. Joyce voices his condemnation of the English cultural domination when he regards the English Dean of Stephen Dedalus' school as an enemy:

*The language in which we were speaking is his before it is mine. How different are the words **home, Christ, ale, Master**, on his lips and on mine!*

I cannot speak or write these words without unrest of spirit. His language, so familiar and so foreign, will always be for me an acquired speech. I have not made or accepted its words. My voice holds them at bay. My soul frets in the shadow of his language. (The Portrait, 175).

Joyce specifically writes about the language of his people because language has a dual role in all cultures. It is a means of communication, as well as “carrier” of a particular culture. Culture embodies all the values people cherish, and against which they can assess themselves. The English language does not reflect all the reality for the people of Barbados because it is not the native language.

Joyce, thus, resents the cultural stifling that colonialism causes. Different national sensibilities have various ways of expressing themselves, but colonialism impinges on the linguistic aspect of life. Cultural domination destroys the psyche and this is what Joyce seems to lament.

Lamming *In the Castle*, shows how oppressive the colonial presence is in Barbados:

In every corner of the school the tricolour Union Jack flew its message. The colours though three in number had by constant repetition produced something vast and terrible, a kind of pressure or presence of which everyone was a part. (In the Castle of my Skin, 36).

Both writers attempt in their two novels to build from an environment that is limited by domination, and which they regard as prisons. They express the growth of national consciousness in both Ireland and Barbados, and even when they exile themselves, they continue to write about their homes. By their literary efforts, they create a culture where none seems to have been allowed to flourish. While Joyce works some aspects of European mythology into his novel⁴, Lamming creates from the historical and social experiences of peasants in Barbados in particular, and blacks in general.

It is clear that literary influence occurs at the time of the emergence of a national literature, particularly a time of change in the history of a people. *In the Castle of My Skin* shows the West Indian society growing from a slave society to a democratic one. It is a society in transition and the quest for identity, history and race, manifested in the lives of the people, are also the themes that Lamming tackles in the novel.

Both Joyce's *The Portrait* and Lamming's *In the Castle* trace the development of the artistic hero. Joyce's Stephen Dedalus and Lamming's G. are shaped by experiences gained from their families, religion, the gang, the school, and the politics of the time. Childhood for both heroes are both unhappy and insecure. Stephen Dedalus suffers the consequences of his father's perpetual debts and drinking habits manifested in the constant change of accommodation and by the type of school life he experiences. While the craving for knowledge and understanding mysteries fail to pull him to the priesthood, it

is the desire to pursue a vocation that draws him to an artistic life.

In Lamming's *In the Castle* there is a parallel between the West Indian experience and the Biblical experience of the Jews. The peasants and the characters use the Bible stories as frames of reference and comparison. This accounts for the peasants regarding Mr. Slime as "a kind of black Jesus" (167). With the establishment of the Penny Bank and the Friendly Society, Mr. Slime promises the people that the two economic institutions would help them become owners of the land. Eventually, the villagers are dispossessed by the sale of the village lands, while Mr. Slime enriches himself through the two institutions he had nurtured into being.

G's personal experience of religion is with the open-air prayer meeting of a spiritual sect into which he refuses to be intergrated. G. flees from the prayer group to join the members of his gang for an adventure to the landlord's house. The demand of the group for a rebirth in Christ frightens and makes G. reflective. Religion at first has a literal and practical application for the children. For them, the "other world" is the landlord's place, and the party at which the landlord hosts the foreign sailors is seen by Boy Blue as the next world:

"Tis like a next world, the music an' the drink an' all that, an particular the way they hold on to one another." (173).

The religion the boys understand is geared towards the world of peasant experience. The discovery of the boys in the

landlord's garden exposes the gang to the overseer's threat. The prayer meeting from which they had fled earlier offers them protection from the overseer. Amidst the worshippers, the children can hide after their escapade and pretend having "received the call". By their seeming innocent action the children use the crowd of worshippers against the overseer. Religion becomes for the boys an instrument that offers escape from reality. Participation in religious activity is made hypocritical; it fails to offer lasting solace or comfort; rather, it gives temporary relief.

Experience of school in either novel highlights the artistic hero trying to understand the world around him. The education the hero in *In the Castle* receives is not oriented towards his needs. It is inadequate because it breeds a group of ignorant people. When it fails to include the history of slavery in the scheme of studies, it robs the pupils of the knowledge of their roots. It is an enslaving type of education that neglects to develop the quality of independence; it limits the spirit and vision so that the colonial ideal the educational system sets out to achieve for the blacks is merely illusory.

One example of school experience is the injustice of most school punishments. Stephen Dedalus is punished by the Perfect of Studies for failing to participate in class-work owing to Stephen's broken glasses. Stephen's mates condemn his punishment as unfair and unjust, and plot that Stephen should report his wrongful punishment to the Rector in order to obtain redress as well as "make history". After all, somebody great had done such a thing in history. Stephen takes the decision for his action, however. He earns a hero's

applause from his mates for his courage in reporting the Prefect of Studies to the Rector.

A similar punishment is meted to an unnamed boy in *In the Castle* (representative of every black boy and also a member of the gang of boys). While Stephen carries out the plot of his gang in *A Portrait*, the nameless boy in *In the Castle* is confused about the action his mates plan that he should take against the Headmaster of Creighton Primary School. The boy is not as enthusiastic as his mates about making history by stoning the Headmaster. His state of ignorance is marked by the confusion he expresses when he is urged to take action. In the end, he suffers his punishment in silence while Stephen Dedalus emerges a hero for his action.

The restlessness of youth is expressed by the turmoil the artist undergoes in the discovery of self. At first the restlessness is masked by group involvement. The artists-to-be take refuge in numbers and indulge in the noise and escapades associated with youth. Later, however, restlessness gives way to isolation and privacy. The isolation heightens the senses of perception of things and objects.

The artistic quest begins early in G's life (Lamming himself). In one of his early poems he speaks of retreating from "the multitude monotonous cry/for freedom and politics at the price of blood/ into an aesthetic world where "the spirit can live every moment in the soul's devouring flames"⁵. Consequently, G. is different right from the beginning of the novel. Inquisitive, more sensitive and perceptive, we notice that G's ninth birthday celebration proves a failure because

he fails to explore and prove his family history, and the flood with which the novel starts is a communal calamity.

Similarly, in *The Portrait*, Stephen Dedalus is regarded by one of his college friends as “an antisocial being”, wrapped up in himself. We know it is during the moment of isolation that Stephen Dedalus experiences his epiphany:

He was alone. He was unheeded, happy and to the wild heart of life. He was alone and young and wilful and wild-hearted, alone amid a waste of wild air and brackish waters and the sea harvest of shells and tangle and veiled grey sunlight and gayclad lightclad figures of children and girls and voices childish and girlish in the air (The Portrait, 1158).

Lamming also borrows the technique of the epiphanies. In Joyce's *The Portrait*, an epiphany had three dimensions. As Ather-ton states, an epiphany is that moment when a thing gains significance. It could, perhaps, be when a person made a remark which displayed his true character, when he – as we say – ‘give himself away’. On the other hand, it might be the ‘explosion out of darkness’ which as Gerard Manley Hopkins describes is “when one part of the veil shrouding the mystery of the world was suddenly drawn aside for a moment, and the true meaning of an object revealed ...”⁶

The epiphany is a moment of realization. In Christian ideology, it is a moment when God discloses himself to his creatures; that is, when He manifests himself. At that moment of revelation the real identity of an object is discovered and

that singular object becomes a symbol of beauty. This happens because the hero perceives the real beauty of life from the trivial object, event or situation. Thus every action, object and incident can become an instrument of revelation. Since the epiphany originates from the meaning which is attached to the redemption of mankind, it stands that an artist emerges because he perceives the reality of existence; to him the "soul" of an object is transparent: it magnifies the unity and beauty of existence. There is therefore, an intuitive grasp of reality: an illuminating discovery.

The first revelation Stephen experiences is understanding the mythical origin of his names. He comes to know his real personal and familial identity. Dedalus is his artistic father; therefore, Stephen would like Dedalus, "create proudly out of the freedom and power of his soul" (157). The next epiphany is at twilight when Stephen watches the beauty of the "water girl" without being lustful about her. Perception of the "water girl's" beauty purges from Stephen's inward sight the veil which had covered it from the wonders of our humanity. Stephen's mind is "arrested and raised above desire and loathing" (190). The "Water-girl" is human and humanity is God's greatest creation. She is also an embodiment of beauty. Since ultimate beauty is God's, it is at this point that Stephen recognizes that all creation is saturated with beauty. Stephen is enraptured by the girl who represents both reality and something beyond it. The Epiphany in Christianity is observed as a Church Festival in commemoration of the coming of the magi as the first manifestation of Christ to the Gentiles. It is celebrated on the sixth of January every year.

When Stephen chooses art as his vocation therefore, it is as if he were choosing a type of priesthood in order to express the beauty of existence. His choice is regarded as an ultimate worship of the source of beauty. As an artist he would allow his spirit to soar and be in unity with the source of beauty. By doing that he would be able to reveal the “wholeness, harmony and radiance” (196) of beauty. Stephen’s soul is fettered by nationality, language and religion; but, the dedication he needs to be able to write about beauty is all consuming and total. It “has to be perceived in the Smithy of his soul”. The implication is that devotion to art becomes the greatest activity of man; it is a divine involvement. This is so because, art is beauty and beauty is divine. Everything in nature has beauty and therefore attributes of divinity:

His role thus, became heroic; and the act of creation became a high mystery performed in an aura of trance and revelation... The artistic view point thus became distinctive and acquired a kind of absolute morality of its own, an autonomy associated perhaps, with the diminution of the religious view of life; for it became a secular religion.⁷

By its very nature art must be objective; it is its objectivity that liberates the human spirit. Consequently, the artist can go out of his own nature and identify himself with the beautiful thought, action or person. He can imagine deeply and feel intensely the pains and joys of others. The distancing that this type of aesthetic commitment implies is that the artist would overcome all social restraint and entanglement to create a society imaginatively.

The epiphanies in Lamming's *In the Castle* are however more of group experiences than personal ones. While Joyce's Stephen discovers his identity when his gang of adventurers hail him as "Stephenos Ddalus! Bous Stephanoumensi! Bous Stephanoumenos", that is ("The garlanded OX! The OX; bearer of a garland") – (155); Lamming's G. becomes aware of his individual identity when Boy Blue, a member of his gang gives expression to the development of awareness in individuals.

... You never know as you yourself say when something go off pop in yuh head an' you ain't the same man you think you was. You start to do an' say things which you know is true but is seem it ain't you doin' an' saying them... A thing go off in yuh head pop pop, an' you's a different man. You ain't the same sort of person everybody is. You start to feel you different from everybody else, an' if that sort of thing go on you'll feel that there's nobody like you. I don't mean that you'll get great, an' don't want to speak to anybody. I don't mean that at all. I mean you'll get the feeling there ain't no other man like yourself, that you is you, so to speak, an' there can't be any other you. An' that everybody else, is different from you. You start to believe you see things nobody else see, an' you think things nobody else think, an' that sort of thing can take you far, far, far... Boy, you'll get so lonely it would be a shame... (142-143).

Boy Blue highlights the mystery of individual growth and development. Embodied in this idea is the issue of change from childhood through adolescence to adulthood. But this

change does not come to the members of the gang all at once. It comes later for G. When it overtakes him, he associates his knowledge of his identity with what his mother told him about having his own mind, because the mind makes a man becomes what he wants to be.

It is through the experience of the buried pebble however, that G. discovers his identity. Boy Blue and G's mother prepare G. for this personal and private experience. The symbol of the pebble represents privacy and individuality. The buried pebble differently expresses the loss, the change, and the gradual erosion of ideas and values from which an individual grows. The pebble also resolves G.'s inner turmoil about his departure to Trinidad from objects and persons he loves in the village. After the experience of the buried pebble the hero endures Trumper's departure to America, while Boy Blue and Bob remain in the village to join the police force. The disappearance of the pebble illustrates the brevity of the youthful gang before they go their different ways in adulthood. It is difficult for G. to participate in the life of the village because he had been alienated from it by the High School. The pebble thus marks out the lone life of G.; later, the other members realizing G.'s allegiance exclude G. from their games. The lesson of the pebble is clear: attachment to an object does not diminish with distance from it. Here Lamming affirms that "an artist remains within or behind or beyond or above his handwork, invisible refined out of existence, indifferent, paring his fingernails" (*A Portrait*, 199).

Familial identity which seems to be distorted in the West-Indian situation, is an issue whose implications are revealed to the boy-characters. The experience of “the two crabs in strange intercourse” serve as a revelation to the hero in understanding the marriage institution in their society. The hero and his group perceive that the nature of the marriage institution in the slave society does not fulfill the needs of all concerned.

The two stories of Jen and Jon; and Bots, Bambi and Bambina are centred on marital conflict and the eventual misery and anguish all concerned experience. Creatures like crabs live in harmony with one another without any official marriage. The boys seem to indict institutionalized marriage because of its undercurrent of hypocrisy. In the two marriage relations the children discuss, trouble erupts with the plan to make a lasting attachment in the Church, resulting in the death of Bambina in the Bots, Bambi and Bambina affair. The point of reference for the children seems to be the crabs who exhibit “absolute togetherness” (133). The boys seem to argue that harmony, wholesomeness and unity (features of a good family) can only result if the type of marriage association they know in their environment (an inheritance from the slavery days) is recognized.

Besides this new understanding of their society, the boys discover suddenly the beauty of familiar objects. They now discover that the beauty of crabs’ eyes comes from outside the crabs.

We could find no colour for the eyes. They were so pretty. Not red or green, or bright, yellow, or deep orange, or anything definite, but a wild, exchanging mixture of all these colours. Crabs' eyes were the most puzzling we could recall... And the movement of the crabs' eyes was as wonderful. They were lifted so that they seemed to see all around and in all directions at the same time... (128-129).

Crabs' eyes are mysterious; they "see all round at the same time". This attribute links the crabs to the Deity from whom they derive their beauty and mystery.

The mysterious nature of crabs' eyes matches the mysterious character of the unnamed fisherman from behind the lighthouse who rescues Boy blue from the waves. The fisherman is confident, unpredictable and establishes a dominating presence in the novel. He contradicts the action of the waves and looks as forbidding as the chaotic sea:

There was something powerful and corrective about his big figure. He walked back slowly looking up at the sky as if it had told him something that wasn't true. His elbows were enormous. We wondered at the breath and bigness of his back. It seemed to stand up on its own. If you saw his back first, you might get the feeling that there was something terrifying in front of it. You might have liked to have a look at his face, but not for him to know... He wasn't the sort of person you looked at without feeling terribly little. His giant frame urged the sensation... (148).

The fisherman manifests skill in plugging his nests in the sand and fishing out Boy Blue from the waves. The fisherman saves Boy Blue. Functioning as a saviour, he symbolizes Christ who fishes out and saves souls. His divinity and humanity seem to be linked:

His anger was human, His absolute command and assurance as the waves washed up against his feet and the net spread before him were not. That was not human at all... Some hours ago we had discovered a giant. How we had discovered a man... Contact had made him human. Now he was like us (122-153).

The fisherman appears to be in command of things: the sky, the waves. His symbolic dimension is extended when Bob asserts that his “father-a fisherman”, is all knowing. Here Lamming shows that in the most ordinary objects and situations occur the transcendence of God.

Boy Blue’s experience is a near-tragic one that begets fear in him and his friends. The fisherman first looks at Boy Blue in disgust and later in pity and earnestness for the boy’s survival. Boy Blue’s predicament engenders loathing; later, the fisherman’s emotions are beyond “desire and loath”. This progression in the feelings achieves aesthetic distance.

Apart from the revelations encountered collectively, Lamming’s hero and his friends Trumper experience some manifestations individually. G. perceives Trumper’s evident emancipation on the latter’s return from America. Trumper’s careful speech, his restraint in eating, his happy and confident

assurance encourage G. about the prospects of adult-life. America had changed Trumper's vision of life and reactions to situations. America enables Trumper to discover his race:

'My people' he said again, 'or better, my race'. 'Twus in the States I find it' an' I'm gonner keep it til thy kingdom com! ... If there be one thing I thank America for, she teach me who my race wus. Now I'm never goin' to lose it. Never, never (295).

Trumper's awareness of race serves as catalyst for G. It infuses him with the need for exile. Exile bestows responsibility and stability on Trumper's emotions, and knowledge of race heals the feeling of aloneness.

There is also the influence of Joyce on Laming's narrative technique. It appears the characters let their thoughts be known instead of the author telling us about them. Laming's probing and often-symbolic narrative reflected in his description of the adventures of G.'s mates, his use of dialect, shifts in view point, all raise the quality of the narrative. At the end of the novel he adopts the diary technique like James Joyce. The diary technique achieve objective distance whereas in the earlier part of the narrative he is subjective.

For the artistic heroes, words assume an importance. Stephen Dedalus' and G.'s perception of words is personal, and both recognize that words mirror the soul of the artist. When Stephen Dedalus reflects on the beauty of words and the fascination they hold for him he says:

Words. Was it their colour⁵r?... No, it was not their colours: it was the poise and balance of the period itself. Did he then love the rhythmic rise and fall of words better than their associations of legend and colour? Or was it that, being as weak of sight as he was shy of mind, he drew less pleasure from the reflection of the glowing sensible world through the prism of a language many coloured and richly storied than from the contemplation of an inner world of individual emotions mirrored perfectly in a lucid supple periodic prose? (The Portrait, 154).

Stephen uses words to evoke feelings and impressions. Significantly, Joyce changes his style to reflect the artistic development of Stephen.

In The Castle, on the other hand, G.'s companions try to disentangle their minds from other minor experiences after the epiphanies. With the type of feelings they nurse – “big, big. feeling” (153), they are handicapped by their lack of verbal resourcefulness. They are quick to notice however that often words inhibit and mask feelings.

... Perhaps we could do better if we had good big words like the educated people. But we didn't. We had to say something was like something else, and whatever we said didn't convey all that we felt... Language was a kind of passport. You could go where you like if you had a clean record. You could say what you like if you know how to say it. It didn't matter whether you felt everything you said. You had language good, big words to make up for

what you didn't feel.... Perhaps we would do better if we were educated. For the time being, we weren't going to say a word to anybody. Not a word. (In the Castle, 154).

Without verbal communication the feeling becomes more intense; feeling and secrecy belong to creativity. Whereas Lamming's G. adopts secrecy, Joyce's Stephen takes silence as one of his weapons for creativity. Another is exile. Both writers like their heroes experience exile. The exile of the writers and their heroes express an extreme form of alienation. Exile is certainly a stage in the creative development of the two heroes because it extends their narrow but deep experience of life. Life in exile enables them to achieve greater creative objectivity and perhaps get a more receptive audience.

The artistic life presupposes freedom and dedication. These conditions are attained through silence, which emanates from seclusion and aloneness. Escape ensures liberation and prevents the heroes from being stunted by their claustrophobic environments. Cunning also comes into creativity because the artist demands cleverness and skill for creation. The joy in a vocation is attested to at the end of *The Portrait* when Stephen asserts:

April 26, Mother is putting my new second-hand clothes in order. She prays now, she says, that I may learn in my own life and away from home and friends what the heart is and what it feels. Amen. So be it. Welcome O life: I go to encounter for the millionth time the reality of experience... (235).

Stephen leaves home to be himself, to express himself, and to make his own judgments about life.

But G. *In the Castle* leaves Creighton village in a moment of gloom and uncertainty for the peasants in Barbados. The flood that starts the novel seems to equal the darkness which erupts as a result of Mr. Slime's dispossession of the villagers. The two catastrophic incidents happen to a deep-feeling people.

III

Lamming has by His own innovations in form and content as well as a re-interpretation of Joyce's *The Portrait* produced a novel that is native to the West Indies. The re-interpretation is the result of the divergence in the idea of the function of the artist between Joyce and Lamming. Joyce sees his responsibility as an artist as one involving escape from the culture. Art demands solitude and mysterious knowledge because it does not merely mean but is; Lamming on the other hand, regards the artist as a humanist who creates a body of knowledge for the education of his people. Like Achebe,²² Lamming links art and education in the goal of enhancing understanding.

Notes

1. James Joyce, *A Portrait for the Artist as a Young Man*. (London: Heinemann Educational Books Ltd., 1973). Referred to in this essay as *The Portrait*.
2. George Lamming, *In the Castle of my Skin* (London: Longman Group Ltd., 1970). Referred to as *In the Castle*.
3. Ulrich Weisstein, "Influence and Imitation" in *Comparative Literature and Literary Theory: Survey and Introduction* (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1973), 32.
4. Christian and Greek myths are used in James Joyce's *The Portrait*. The myth of Stephen, the first martyr is used as well as the Greek myth of Dedalus who made the first attempt to fly into space.
5. 'Birthday Poem (for Clifford Sealy), B. B. C. *Caribbean Voices*, 24 September, 1950. Quoted in In Munro "George Lamming" in Bruce King (ed.) *West Indian Literature* (London and Basingstoke: The Macmillan Press Ltd., 1979).
6. J.S. Atherton, "Introduction and Notes to James *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* XII.
7. Malcolm Bradbury, *The Social Context of Modern English Literature* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1971), 76.
8. Chinua Achebe, "The Novelist as Teacher" in *Morning Yet on Creation Day* (London: Heinemann 1975), 42 – 45.

14. German Studies in Africa with a Closer Reference to Nigeria: Problems, Prospects, Perspectives

F.N. Ibemesi

The Global Picture and the Nigerian Experience

In Africa, German studies as a discipline is almost as exotic as the study of African languages or African studies under the common name Africanology in Germany. Although the West African Examinations Council (WAEC) has provision for German language certificate examination in the syllabus, it is usually the French-speaking African countries that include German in their secondary school curricula. For decades in Nigeria, only the German School in Lagos teaches German at the secondary school level. It was only in the early 1990s that two private schools in the Western part of Nigeria took up the teaching of German at the secondary school level and enrolled students to take the language at General Certificate Examination (GCE) level. There are some German language schools in different parts of the country but they only teach the language for special purposes and not for school leaving certificate. Many Nigerians also go to the German language culture Institute (Goethe Institute) in Lagos to enroll for the language courses for different purposes.

About a decade ago, a study done by the International Association of Germanists showed that, of the one thousand, two hundred and twenty members then, only twenty came from the whole of Africa (Ihekweazu *Länder Bericht* 4). In

the same study, it was found out that apart from members from Germany, four hundred and eleven members came from Japan while two hundred and thirty-one came from the United States. One is tempted to infer from a study like the above that, inquisitiveness about other languages and cultures is related to technological advancement. There is, it seems to us, no other reason to explain the fact that more technologically advanced countries show more interest in learning about other people and their cultures and languages. Time without number, we have always tried to emphasize the need for Nigeria to allow the inclusion of foreign languages other than French in the school curricula because nations get at the secrets of other people by knowing their language and other aspects of culture. Other foreign languages do not have to compete with French in the curricula, but there should be a possibility of small percentage of Nigerians who are keenly interested in picking up some elementary knowledge of other foreign languages in secondary schools to assist them in the advanced learning of those languages later at the tertiary level if they so wish. Our experience at the University of Nigeria Nsukka has shown that all the students admitted to do German by direct entry, often from Cameroon, perform far better than the best from Nigerian school system. They normally start from second year when they are admitted, yet they always perform even better than most of our final years at the point of entry. None of them has ever left our university with lower than second class upper division. Some come out in first class even in the certificate examinations they take in Goethe Institute during their year abroad. We really need to make our society more conscious of the importance of foreign language teaching and learning.

When in 1979 a conference was organized on the 'Twenty Years of German Studies in Nigeria', Professor Feuser had to compile a book on the same title (*Twenty years... 1979*). Studies in the said book show that the teaching and learning of German started in Nigeria in the 1950s, with the University College, Ibadan, as the first port of entry. In the 1950s, German was taught at Ibadan as ancillary course to students of Chemistry and some other science students until gradually, the language got removed as a requirement for the said group of students. With the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) involvement in the 1960s, DAAD lecturers were sent to University of Ibadan in 1960 and Nsukka in 1961 to assist in a more regular teaching of German in the Universities. As a result in 1968, Professor Feuser graduated the first Nigerian who did German and French as a combined degree course at the University of Ibadan before he moved to the University of Ife, now Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife in the same year (*'Thirty years... 1991'*).

One would have been led to believe by the above information that by now German teaching and learning in Nigeria must be overpopulated. But on the contrary, there have been fluctuations in the number of teachers and learners of German in the Nigerian Universities over the decades. Today, of the more than thirty-six universities in the country, only three award degrees in German studies, some others teach German as elective or service course. The above reason, and the issue of brain-drain which resulted in Nigerians trained in German, (at times with sponsorship from DAAD), not returning resulted in DAAD withdrawing their teaching assistance in the 1990s from the University of Ibadan and University of

Nigeria. They also stopped sponsoring our students to Germany and, even the entry permit to go to Germany for a first degree became difficult for our students. Although DAAD left one teaching assistant at Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-ife, that did not help our year-abroad programme. An alternative had to be sought. The Goethe Institute in Lagos (German Language and Culture Institute), collaborated with the staff of the German language units of the universities and worked out an alternative year-abroad programme whereby, students from the three universities now go to Goethe Institute in their third year for German. Occasionally, a few students who could afford it make private arrangements with the consent of the Departments and go to Germany for the year-abroad.

In the year 2001, DAAD reopened sending a teaching assistant to the University of Ibadan. Although they have not done the same for University of Nigeria, Nsukka, they have trained two members of German teaching staff at Nsukka to a Ph.D level. We are expecting one of the two, who finished this year with 'High Honours' (Summa cum laude) back any time from now. Nsukka has postgraduate degree programmes in German since the 1980s which was only kept in abeyance due to insufficient number of teaching staff as a result of death of late Professor Edith Ihekweazu, the founder of the programme, and the problem of other staff who left on study leave and never came back. But we are hopeful that in the not so distant future, we shall take up the programmes again.

German studies in Africa and in Nigeria is a necessity and, many scholars have over the years advanced reasons why

foreign language teaching and learning are invaluable for all nations, not just African countries. We do not intend to belabour the point. In the earlier decades up to the 1990s, German studies by Africans who pursued their postgraduate studies showed areas of particular interest. According to Edith Ihekweazu, "... For those who have advanced in the study of German culture, areas of particular interest for certain authors and themes have already emerged indicating an independent approach" (9). The areas of interest were concentrated on studies of colonial literature, travelogues and imagological studies, specifically 'the image of the blacks in German literature'. But the said areas of interest were also handled by non-Africans (Stein *Das Bild des...* 1972). The amount of literature available shows that this area of interest has been satisfactorily dealt with. However, the image of the German in African literature has not been given equal treatment. There is presently an increasing number of Black and Afro-German creative works including literature. For decades, it has been common to talk about African literature in French, and in English. One can talk about African literature in German today. There are two groups of artists in this category of German literature. The first group comprises those artists born of Black and Afro/German parents, while the second group comprises Africans who have lived in Germany and studied their language and culture so well as to do creative works in them. In addition to these two groups of Afro-German writers, there is a third group which comprises Germans and other nationals who translate serious literary works of our famous African artists like Wole Soyinka, Chinua Achebe, Flora Nwapa, Cyprian Ekwensi and a host of others. For the purpose of this paper, we are recommending

that future studies in German literature should look at the above mentioned literature as alternative in German literary studies. Scholars have enough translations they could compare with the originals of the authors. We would prefer a situation whereby the literary texts done by the Afro-German writers are studied first and foremost as creative works and not primarily as collections of images of “the other” in the literature.

We shall summarily present some of the translation projects on African writers, before we thematically discuss Hans-Jürgen Massaquoi’s novel titled *Neger, Neger, Schornsteinfeger* (2001).

Survey of African Literature in Germany: Impetus of Intercultural German Studies

The twentieth century witnesses an increasing interest in African literature in Germany. There have been translations into German, of works by major African writers to make them accessible to German reading audience. Unlike Africans, the Germans have a very good reading culture, and are very inquisitive about creative works which are presented to them as fascinating. Germans who have been to Africa especially the ethnologists and anthropologists, as well as Africans themselves have undertaken to translate collected folk and other tales from Africa into German for the consumption of the German public. Horst Erdmann Verlag has undertaken the task of assisting the cultural exchange between Africa and Germany by working with those

translators and editors of African literature and publishing their collections (1976).

In the early 1970s, earlier works of Chinua Achebe and Wole Soyinka among other African writers have been translated into German and a number of German Africanists were already familiar with these renowned African writers and have done critical works on them (Böttischer *Tradition und...* 1978).

Interest in Nigerian Literature was further aroused in Germany with the award of Nobel prize to Wole Soyinka. Today, German Foreign Office finances the translation of Nigerian books. According to Werner Grigutsch, 'The Federal Republic of Germany has made important contributions towards promoting the development of Nigeria's publishing industry by helping to generate international interest in its books and assisting the country's marketing efforts abroad (*Inter Nationes* 1). A number of German translations were published with the financial support of the German Federal Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Bonn. With around forty-five German translations in 1998, Nigerian literature ranked as the second most widely published literature from the Sub-Saharan Africa in the German-speaking region after books from South Africa. Several anthologies on Nigerian Literature are also currently available on the book markets in Germany, Switzerland and Austria.

Among the translations into German are Soyinka's nine books and he is popular in Germany. His novel *Ake – The*

Years of Childhood and Ibadan – The Penkeleemes Years, Ken Saro-Wiwa's *Sozaboy* and *A Forest of Flowers*, Chinua Achebe's *An African Portrait*, Toyin Adewale's *Flickering Candle*, Simi Bedford's *Yoruba Girl Dancing*, Cyprain Ekwensi's *Burning Grass* are among the translations published in 1998.

Earlier translations available in the German book market include: *The man Died* by Soyinka, *My Life In The Bush of Ghosts* and *Palm-Wine Drinkard* by Amos Tutuola, *Arrow of God*, *Anthills of the Savannah* and *Things Fall Apart* by Chinua Achebe, *The Stillborn* by Zaynab Alkali, *The Slave Girl* by Buchi Emecheta, *Efuru* by Flora Nwapa and *The Famished Road* by Ben Okri among others. More Nigerian fiction in translation were published in 1999. With the above scenario, teaching German language in select secondary schools would not only confront our children with German literature for reading comprehension exercises, but also with a 'diet' of familiar African literature in German. The above picture also goes back to lend support to the ever expressed need for Nigeria to recognize the role of foreign language studies in international relations, information technology and the new craze for a globalisation process. There are also many literature books from other African countries which were translated into German (Dagmar and Petzold *Chinua Achebe*... 1983).

We shall now briefly comment on Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* translated as *Okonkwo Oder Das Alte Stürzt*.

Okonkwo Oder Das Alte Stürzt: A Eurocentric Title for an African Novel

Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* has been translated into German by scholars from the Eastern and Western parts of Germany in the 1980s under the same title as above (Dunu "Okonkwo Oder..." 492). For this paper, we could only get hold of the West German edition of the translation.

The said translation has shown among other things that, the translators needed more information on the Igbo world view to combat with the task of translating certain aspects of the text. Already in the title, Dagmar and Evelin show that they do not appreciate the major thrust of the novel, which is, to exhibit the communal consciousness among the Igbos. One of the themes of the novel is in fact 'Communalism'. If the translators of *Things Fall Apart* understand that the Igbos of the twenty-first century still attach much importance to communal living as against individualism of most developed countries of the West, then they would not have chosen the first part of the title for the novel as *Okonkwo*. The translators see the conflict narrated in the novel more as an alienation of the individual (Okonkwo) from his changing society. The singling out of the chief protagonist Okonkwo shows that he is seen as a lone individual struggling in a society turned upside down, thus, the novel is interpreted by some audience who read the novel only in translation as the tragedy of one man – Okonkwo.

The second part of the title by the translators as *Das Alte Stürzt* which translates *The Old Crumbles* paints the picture

of total destruction or collapse of a system. In other words, the African tradition crumbles on coming in contact with another. Achebe tries to portray in this novel series of conflicts in Igbo society at the point of contact with European colonizers. The conflicts are not restricted to institutions of religion and politics. The novel also thematises the conflicts of generations as shown for example in the relationship between Nwoye and his father Okonkwo. Conflict of generations is not a peculiarity of any culture. It is a phenomenon which is present in every culture. The novel is therefore neither a heroic novel in the tradition of a psychological novel nor a presentation of an overthrow of one tradition by another as some foreign interpreters tend to make it. The one major achievement which the author has aimed at, and succeeded is to counter the thesis that Africans have no culture before the coming of the Europeans. Therefore, Achebe cannot be crumbling a system which he tries to protect and to preserve for posterity.

In conclusion therefore, we have tried to suggest that the title given to the German translation of *Things Fall Apart* as *Okonkwo or the Old Crumbles* is inappropriate because Achebe disapproves of individualism in the novel and uses the novel to prove that Igbos have always had a culture before the Europeans came.

To minimize self-centeredness in a translation of works from other cultures, we share the view of Narang where he maintains that a translator should not only be aware of the history of the 'alien' culture, but should also be able to 'read' his own culture with adequate sensitiveness since through his

‘intercultural mediation’ he has to act as a bridge between the two cultures’ (58).

Neger, Neger, Schornsteinfeger: An Analysis of Hans-Jürgen Massaquoi’s Autobiography.

Black consciousness developed later in Germany than in the rest of the Western world. It was only by the mid 1980’s when the first edition of the book *Farbe bekennen. Afrodeutsche Frauen auf den Spuren ihrer Geschichte* (Oguntoye 1992) appeared that the movement was launched in the German literary history. Since then a number of autobiographies and fiction have been written by Black and Afro-German writers. Although the number of this group of writers is still relatively small, we can comfortably talk of Black-German writers and include same in the curricula of literary studies in the universities.

In 1999, Hans-Jürgen published his autobiographical novel in New York under the title *Destined to Witness*. The German edition came out in 2001 under the title *Neger, Neger; Schornsteinfeger* which translates literally *Nigger, Nigger, Chimney Sweeper*.

Hans – Jürgen was born in 1926 by a German mother to a Liberian father. He spent his entire childhood, teenage and first adult year in Germany, before he got to know his fatherland in 1948. He lived in Liberia only for two years after which he found himself in the United States of America, to the realization of his life dreams. When he finished his secondary education in Germany, he went for technical

training after which he had some working experiences as youth in Nazi and Post –Nazi Germany. It is therefore surprising that his autobiography, which is more emphatic on his first twenty-two years of life experiences in Germany was translated into German by other people. The author is surely versed in German language. It is either he tries to part with the language and culture whose documented experiences he finds unpleasant or, he prefers to see himself from other people's eyes by letting them read and interpret him, considering that a translation is an interpretation of an original work. Literally speaking, *Destined to Witness* does not translate *Neger, Neger, Schornsteinfeger* which the German title of the novel bears. It is however, not doubtful that the author must have made some in-put in the translation because he is versed in the language. Since we could not get hold of the American version of the autobiography for comparison with the translation, we would only try a brief analysis of the translation. In view of our aim and the scope allowed for this paper, we cannot claim an exhaustive analysis of the over five-hundred paged novel in this exercise.

Internet carries information on Hans-Jürgen's among some other Black and Afro-German autobiographies and fiction which are yet to be studied by Nigerian scholars of German literature, particularly those scholars based in Nigeria.

Hans-Jürgen is really destined to witness. His witness is a phenomenon. The first person narrator and hero was destined to grow up as an only black amidst a population of 'Aryan race' of Nazi Germany. But it was also destined that he should witness the reality of his astronomical and privileged

experience become a documented history for posterity. Thanks to his friends Alex Haley and Ralph Giordano who are also writers, and his mentor, former publisher of *Ebony* Periodical John Johnson, who convinced him that, 'his experiences as a young black, who lived and survived in Nazi Germany – an eye witness and often a victim of racist madness of the Nazis, also survivor of the bomb attacks of the allied forces – that as peculiar as those experiences are, he owes it as a duty as a journalist, to make that other view of the holocaust known to a larger public'.

The *Süddeutsche* newspaper describes the novel as being as thrilling as an adventure novel. The novel is certainly not an adventure novel though it contains adventurous episodes. It does not contain the excitement of an adventure novel. The contents are more chilling than thrilling. The first person narrator and chief protagonist goes through experiences peculiar to developmental or educational novel. Stories of adventure often end in mixed feelings of both the narrator and his audience.

The novel is a phenomenal stock of biting memories on the part of the author whose life history is being narrated. No details are left out in the narrator's life history and experiences. This fact is captured by the quotation from Fredrick Douglas which the author cites in the beginning of his prologue. The quotation cited above, by a great fighter of slavery made a mark on the narrator as he undertook to tell his story, not leaving out any detail no matter how degrading.

Hans-Jürgen enjoyed only the first three years of life in his extended family of the Massaquois, headed by his grandfather Momolu Massaquoi, who arrived in Germany in 1922 as the first Liberian general consul. His grandfather had to leave Germany with members of his family in 1929 for political reasons in Liberia. Hans-Jürgen was then left to be brought up by a single parent, his mother Bertha, who experienced with him all the disadvantages of being a coloured person in a population of 'Aryan race' of Hitler – Germany. He could only see his fatherland at the age of twenty-two. The novel is also in part the biography of the narrator's mother, to whom the author dedicates the book. The mother is a model of womanhood and motherhood, a tigress, when it has to do with the need to protect her child in an unfriendly environment of 'wolves'.

We have chosen for the purpose of the paper to discuss briefly only three major themes of this novel namely: the supremacy of motherhood; Racism, War and their adverse effects on the society. These are certainly not the only themes of the novel. The novel is a catalogue of human relationships and consequences of different forms of interpersonal relationships are contained in the novel.

The Supremacy of Motherhood

Bertha Nikodijevic, the mother of the narrator is one of the two main characters in the novel. She is a role model, an exemplary mother. She ennobles womanhood and motherhood and her character supports the Igbo saying that 'mother is supreme'. Ralph Giordano calls the novel the author's praise

song for his mother. Bertha never experienced much of any marital life in her mothering of the narrator, having been denied a wedding a number of times by the father of her son. Yet she accepts her fate as a mother and brought up her son to the best of her ability. She protects him from an environment where even herself, like others, is very different from the fruit of her womb.

It was only in the first three years of the narrator's life that his very dear grandfather took care of him and his mother, having taken them to live with other members of the Massaquoi family. The narrator's father, Al Hajj Massaquoi was then a Law student in Dublin who only came to Germany on vacations. It was during one such vacation that he fell in love with Bertha, and subsequent visit resulted in the arrival of the narrator into the 'hostile' world. As mentioned above, Al Hajj continued shelving a wedding with Bertha with excuses until he left with his father Momolu and other members of the family for Liberia in 1929. Momolu wished to take Bertha and son along to Liberia but doctor's medical advice for the little child made Bertha decide to stay back in Germany with the hope that she would eventually go to Liberia. Her hope was never realized and she had to bring up her son alone under the racist Nazi environment. Both mother and son suffered the fate of being characterized as 'non-Aryans'. Hans-Hürgen lived as the only black in their environment. Once narrating the circumstances of his early childhood he says, 'as a child I saw myself to be the center of the universe. No single day passed without people looking around me and commenting on my looks like....' Hans realized that other children did not get as much attention as

he did. When he asked his mother the reason for his special attention, she said it was because of his brown body and his black curly hair. It never occurred to Hans then that he was different from others around him including his mother. It was then from the mother's response that he started noticing the difference in the skin colour of Europeans and Africans. But because his grandfather who was dark-skinned gave order to people under him, including the whites, he first took it that, dark-skinned people were superior to others. When his loving grandfather left in 1929, it was as if a heavy cross was laid on Hans' mother, not just because she was faced with bringing up her child single-handedly, but more because his child's skin colour became in the Nazi era, a stigma in a society that was determined to exclude and to wipe out those that were characterized to be of 'impure race' in all their affairs. Bertha bore her cross till the end when she and her son, both destined to witness a day of glory, came out triumphant. They succeeded in emigrating to the United States of America in 1950 and 1952, son then, mother respectively. Bertha eventually succeeded in experiencing a marital life with a Serbian for twenty-five years before her Serbian husband Nikojedevic died. But she lived on to a ripe age of eighty-three years, witnessed and experienced two grandsons from Hans. At the time of her exit, one of the grandsons was already a medical doctor, the other a lawyer by the middle 1980's. She is quoted as saying to her grandchildren whenever she heaved sighs of relief, 'Alls well that ends well'. She wished for no further satisfaction from her maker.

We do not intend to narrate all the painful experiences of Bertha and Hans during the Nazi Germany, experiences that

were not painful and disastrous for them alone but for the whole world that experienced Hitler's wicked intentions. But to give a brief summary would do for our purpose here. Bertha was fired from her job and refused employment a number of times for having a non-Aryan relationship. She resorted to some menial jobs to enable her sustain her child. She was never daunted nor down-spirited. She was a tigress who fought boldly for her child's right and protection. Although her fight for her son's right often yielded them nothing under the Nazis who saw nothing good in other races, she never gave up. In school where Hans was often denied privileges given other children, she would go and ask questions to the authorities and fight fiercely for her son. She would console her son whenever he brought home tauntings and mishandlings from children and adults alike, like instances when they called him 'Nigger, Nigger, Chimney sweeper' because of his skin colour. When his mates joined Hitler-youths' group, he was not allowed to join. The directors said it was not a group for non-Aryans like him. Bertha struggled to get him enrolled without success. There are innumerable instances of discriminating experiences suffered by Hans and Bertha. But mother and son kept close together. Even during the total bombing of Hamburg by allied forces, they ensured that none missed the other, and they took refuge in one of Bertha's relation's house in a different town.

When it is considered that in many societies of the twentieth century, child abuse and abortion have become the order of the day, one could not disagree that Bertha deserves honour as a mother, role model for womanhood and motherhood. She did not throw away her son because the father abandoned her,

when strictly speaking, she was never married to the father, the fate that many young women use today as an excuse for either aborting their baby or abandoning their new born child. In the midst of difficulties, even under the danger of losing her life, she did not abandon her child, nor abuse him, after all he looked as different from her as from other people around them and she could easily have gotten rid of him. She carried her cross till the end. Her story leaves the message that mother is supreme and that motherhood should not be desecrated under any circumstance.

Racism, War and their Adverse Effects

The themes of racism and war in this novel will be handled together because the two are tied up together in the narrative. The bulk of the novel narrates how Hitler got the whole world engulfed in a war as a result of his racist instincts. Many of the actions narrated in the novel are tinged with racist inclinations of the characters. The war itself, would not have been declared, if Hitler has not decided to create for himself, a race he called 'Aryan' which he saw as the only 'pure' race. All those who did not qualify for his description of the race including the Jews and the coloured people of the globe were then to be exterminated.

Already early in the novel, the racial prejudice among the Germans is presented by Al Hajj during his first encounter with Bertha when he tells the latter, 'I do not bite, I do not know what you are told about us Africans, but I can pacify you. I am not a cannibal...' Unconsciously for Bertha, this first encounter was an early signal to the biting experiences

she is to have as a result of racial prejudice in the hands of her own people.

In the chapter on Hagenbeck's zoo, (p. 44ff) the narrator presents the display of Africans like animals in the zoo. A village was created in the zoo to display 'primitive folks', their looks and their actions. On a visit to the zoo, one of their members as visitors, requested to be led to the place where she once watched a display of Indians in the zoo. But in place of that, they were told that the Indians were no more on display at the time but Africans. The Africans, they were told, were part of the famous Hagenbeck cultural show in the zoo. The narrator, being also black and an African tried to avoid embarrassment by hiding in the background. But in spite of his efforts, he was spotted by one of the Africans on display. What an experience! The narrator and his mother were embarrassed to discover that human species were imported by Germans to be kept in the zoos for people to go and watch. But ironically as the narrator further puts is, 'there was a point at which it became impossible to say who was watching whom as the displayed animals in the zoo'. The experience however made the narrator and his mother decide not to set foot again in Hagenbeck's animal park. After the war, about fifteen years after the first visit to the zoo, when the narrator went to the zoo on a lady's request, he found out that, though the zoo remained exactly the same as in his childhood memory of it, the African village has disappeared. It would have been interesting to investigate the fate of the said 'African village' of the zoo.

It was when he got enrolled in school that the narrator realized fully that he was different from other children around him. Already on his first day of school, a red-blond boy roared at him, Nigger, Nigger, Chimney sweeper! For them, his black skin could only be the result of sweeping the chimney with its blackness with soot. He was also not spared the discrimination by the teachers. In his own words, 'there is a list of people who made life very difficult for me in those days, but the most wicked, pitiless and merciless of all was Mr. Heinrich Wriede, the new school Headmaster' (pp. 90f). Wriede, like a number of others continued to remind him that he did not belong. What an experience for an innocent little child of six! Wriede went to the extent of forbidding him from wearing a khaki-coloured shirt that his nanny, Mrs. Möller gave him for a birthday present. He said the shirt was the uniform of Hitler youth. The narrator's mother went to school and confronted the headmaster, who in the end was shamed in his error. It is worthy to note that Mrs. Möller, who played a vital role in young Hans' life, taking care of him as the mother went to work saw no difference in Hans from other children, yet she was a pure 'Aryan'. Her case shows that even when there are exceptions, that there is an in-born instinct in women, which makes them less discriminating than men. This also explains the reason why there are more white women than men in the inter-racial marriages of whites and blacks.

Hitler succeeded in sowing the seed of hatred of the Jews and other races of mankind among his admirers. Primary school teachers were even instructed on how to brainwash innocent children to believe that all instructions came from Hitler the

‘Führer’ who must be hailed at the end of every activity and in greetings with the words ‘Hail Hitler!’ (p. 138). Another character, one Mr. Dutke, was also so heartless as to tell the narrator in school one day that, after they have dealt with the Jews, he and his likes (that is the narrator) would be next! Hitler’s first assignment in his declared war was the extermination of the Jews. But providence did not allow a full achievement of his goals as the allied forces thwarted the devilish plans before it came to total reality. Although about six million Jews were killed as the novel also says, Jews still exist till today.

It is an irony of fate that, though the narrator laments that all his friends left and joined the army, either voluntarily or conscripted (p.219), while he was not allowed to join, he lives to narrate the events in history which many of those his friends were not destined to narrate. Many died in the war. He was and is destined to witness all. Even with total bombing which left the city of Hamburg in ruins, Hans and his mother emerged from the rubbles and succeeded in seeking refuge across dangerous zones and survived.

We have tried to show that the writer narrates Hitler’s and other Nazi Germans’ hatred of people of different race, creed and even political leanings which culminated in the second world war that claimed millions of lives and left many Germans homeless at the end of it.

Conclusion

We have tried in this paper to review the state of German teaching and learning in Africa, and in particular in Nigeria. In the introduction we have tried to look at German studies in Africa as whole. Here, we noted that although German is taught in secondary schools in Francophone countries, the number of people who study German at tertiary level still remains small in both Francophone and Anglophone African countries. A study was cited that shows that Africans are not well represented in the International Association of Germanists. Coming home to Nigeria, we noted that although teaching of German started in Nigeria since 1950s, universities in Nigeria are still understaffed in the teaching of German and, out of over thirty universities in the country, only three award degrees in German. The Germans have been supporting the teaching of the language through the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) which has been sending teaching staff to Nigeria since the 1960s. At a stage, DAAD withdrew some of their assistance possibly because of inadequate cooperation they felt among Nigerians. Germanists of African and German origin alike have for a long time focused their research interests on studying the image of the blacks in German literature and have focused attention on travelogues and colonial literature for decades.

We have tried to suggest other areas of research interest for, we felt that imagological studies have been overemphasized as a research area among scholars.

There are now three possible areas that literature and even language and cultural scholars can explore. There are translations of African literature into German supported by German Government. There is a growing number of Black and Afro-German writers for possible studies by scholars.

We have tried to comment on the translation of Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* into German, and we have also tried to discuss two of the themes in Hans-Jürgen Massaquoi's (Afro-German) novel.

Summarily, our aim has been to show that German studies in Nigeria has not been without problems just like many areas of study in the country today.

But then, in spite of the problems, German as an area of study has many prospects and perspectives for exploration by people in the field.

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15. Political Perspectives on Europe in Heine's Travelogues

Edward Mornin

Our late teacher, colleague, and friend Willfried Feuser was a man whose commitment to internationalism was reflected both in his professional work and in his many years of residence distant from his native Germany, in Nigeria, Scotland, and the United States. Even when he was still an undergraduate, Willfried's commitment had been clear. As a student of European languages at the University of Würzburg (where he studied English, French, Spanish, Portuguese, and Italian), he had early been a member of the German Federation of European Youth (bund Europäischer Jugend). In 1989 memoir, he gleefully recalls how his involvement with this group led in 1950 to a sortie, together with some other German and French students, culminating in an at least "symbolic" assault on a border crossing between France and Germany.¹ In celebrating Willfried Feuser's life and works through the medium of an essay, then, it is appropriate enough to consider that other German exile, Heinrich Heine, who, with Goethe, was the most cosmopolitan German author of his age and with him has achieved greater international recognition than any other of his contemporaries. To address oneself to Heine and Europe does not imply, of course, either that Europe provides the only prism through which his works can be viewed or that he himself was in a real sense an architect of modern Europe. His writings do, however, have

much of interest and of weight to say about Europe, as well as about individual European countries.

It should be stated at the outset that Heine cannot be considered a political philosopher of Europe in the narrower sense of the term. In fact, he devoted no one work exclusively to Europe, though references to it as a political or cultural entity are legion in his writings. This "lack of focus", as one might call it, does not signify disinterest, however, but is altogether characteristic of Heine's prose writing style. In his prose works he constantly shifts from one topic to another, conveying impressions and insights rather than describing or developing his views at length or in depth. There are various reasons for this - among others, the desire to entertain his audience without tiring them, and the wish to suggest his "harmlessness" to his political censors, and in this way to evade their closer critical scrutiny. Not least, however, as Heine himself claimed (245),² his style reflects the "Zerrissenheit" (the condition of being torn or disrupted) of the intellectual and cultural life of his age - one manifestation of which was the political and social disruption of Germany and of Europe. Germany remained a divided nation until 1871, and Europe is still on the road to unification today, almost a hundred and fifty years after Heine's death.

Heine's life-experience and education early stimulated in him an interest in events and issues beyond the narrow confines of the German States. He was born in 1797 in Dusseldorf, capital of the then Duchy of Julich-Berg, which was occupied by revolutionary France from 1795 to 1801, and from 1806 to 1809 (as the Grand Duchy of Berg) was ruled by Napoleon's

brother-in-law, Joachim Murat. French administration saw the introduction of the Napoleonic Code into Berg, and a major part of Heine's schooling was actually in French. By an imperial edict of 1814, natives of Düsseldorf received the right of domicile in France, so Heine was able to move there easily, as they did in 1831. Political and social frustrations at home and better employment opportunities in France prompted his move. In fact, he spent the last twenty-five years of his life in voluntary exile in Paris, though he remained a Prussian citizen until his death in 1856. Beyond that, Heine's interests in literature, politics, culture, and society were at all times broadly international, and when he converted from Judaism to Lutheranism in 1825, at least one of his motives, as he mockingly put it in his *Aphorismen und Fragmente* (*Aphorisms and Fragments*), was to acquire an "admission ticket to European culture."³

In the interests of concision, attention will focus here on Heine's ideas on Europe rather than on his cosmopolitan views in general, and more specifically attention will focus on his European travelogues, where his ideas are brought together with the greatest concentration. Heine's European travelogues comprise his *Reisebilder* (*Travel Pictures*) (1826-1831), plus his essay *Über Polen* (*About Poland*) of 1823.⁴ In the *Travel Pictures* are republished eight travel accounts that had earlier appeared in newspapers or magazines - namely *Die Harzreise* (*The Harz Journey*), *Die Nordsee* (*The North Sea*), *Ideen. Das Buch Le Grand* (*Ideas. The Book of Le Grand*), *Briefe aus Berlin* (*Letters from Berlin*), *Reise von München nach Genua* (*The Journey from Munich to Genoa*), *Die Bäder von Lucca* (*The Baths of Lucca*), *Die Stadt Lucca*

(*The City of Lucca*), and *Englische Fragmente* (*English Fragments*). These works reflect their author's visits to various parts of Germany (to Berlin, the Harz Mountains, and the North Sea), as well as to Poland, England, and Italy (which he reached through the Austrian Tyrol). It was his travelogues that first established Heine as a witty, provocative, and, it must be said, sometimes contradictory commentator on a wide range of social, political, and cultural topics relating to Europe as a whole. His travelogues also remain his most popular prose works today.

In his *Travel Pictures*, Heine more or less created a new genre for himself.⁵ He departs from the traditional travelogue popular in his day in that he conveys no overall impression of his experiences on any one journey. Instead, he characteristically blends reportage with political and social commentary and with fictional narrative, and devotes a minimum of space to topographical description and historical exposition. For instance, in his Italian travelogues (namely, *Journey from Munich to Genoa*, *The Baths of Lucca*, and *The City of Lucca*), he scarcely mentions Classical antiquity at all, in sharp contrast, for example, to Goethe in his more traditional *Italienische Reise* (*Italian Journey*) (1816-1817). Heine writes about *modern* Italy (its poverty and its then political subjugation to Austria), and he stresses not the past, but the *passage of time* and the changes (good or bad) that this brings. Features of dress or architecture or works of art receive mention in *Travel Pictures* only in so far as they illustrate social and political circumstances, in which Heine was primarily interested. Consider, for example, his comments on the opera in both Germany and Italy. In his

Letters from Berlin, he suggests the political implications of the quarrel between the supporters of Carl Maria von Weber (the people's favourite) on the one hand, and the supporters of Spontini (the favourite of the Prussian royal court) on the other (446-452). And in *Journey from Munich to Genoa*, he characterizes the opera as a sort of outlet for Italian love of freedom under Austrian domination (198-200). The shabbily dressed Italians and the crumbling splendour of their ancient monuments also testify graphically to the misère of modern Italy under the Austrian yoke.

Perhaps surprisingly, given the French component in his upbringing, none of Heine's *Travel Pictures* is devoted to France. In fact, he did not visit France until 1831, by which time the series was complete, though his original purpose in going there was to collect materials for a further travelogue. It is essential to note, however, that for him the most important event of the modern age was the French Revolution, and the most important ingredient of European, not just French, culture was the Enlightenment that had given birth to the Revolution. France consistently provides Heine in his *Travel Pictures* with a yardstick against which other European nations are measured. Hence, he can write in *About Poland*, for instance, that Poland is situated between "Russia and - (not Germany but) France" (492) - that is to say, between despotism on the one hand and political freedom on the other. In addition to this French frame of reference, Heine was, of course, ever mindful of his German audience, at whom his political commentaries were ultimately directed. And beyond that, as he writes in his *English Fragments*, he believed that the European nations, specifically England and

France, were drawing closer together in his time (372). In other words, a European framework is implied to his comments on individual nations in his *Travel Pictures*.

Given the extremely varied character of Heine's travelogues, it is advisable to forego any kind of summary of them here and to concentrate instead on specific aspects of them. They will be considered here under four main perspectives of European pertinence. These comprise Heine's views on *nationalism*, on the *aristocracy*, on *state religion*, and on *historical change*. Though these four divisions overlap to some extent, they do so in instructive ways.

Let us, then, first examine the theme of nationalism. The victorious armies of Napoleon Bonaparte had brought the influence and the often destructive might of the French Empire to the farthest reaches of Europe, from Spain to Russia, and from Germany to Italy. Heine, it should be noted, could see little wrong in this, because, for him, Napoleon was carrying abroad the emancipatory ideas of the French Revolution. In Germany as a whole, however, the reaction to Napoleon was overwhelmingly negative and culminated in the Wars of Liberation of 1813 to 1815. Many of the German participants in these wars were actually political liberals, but in response to French imperialism many of them also became nationalists. (Theodor Körner, Friedrich Ludwig Jahn, and Ernst Moritz Arndt offer good examples of this trend.) Heine rejected this German nationalism on several counts. He found it anti-rational, often anti-Semitic, and ultimately reactionary in its glorification of an idealized German past, linked as this was for him with the power of the aristocracy and the

Catholic Church. On account of their perceived nationalism, Heine rejected the German liberals of his day, and he uses the terms "Wars of Liberation" and "heroes of liberation" (*Letters from Berlin*, 473) in a pejorative sense in reference to Germany in the period 1813 to 1815 and after. Before he can use such terms positively, he must first transform them to speak, for example, of the "holy wars of liberation of humanity," as he does in *Journey from Munich to Genoa* (223). Here, too, he refers to himself as a "good soldier" in these wars (227).

As stated above, Heine in his *English Fragments* saw the European nations of his day drawing ever closer together. Indeed, he believed that the nation state as then known was in its death throes. For that reason, and despite his sympathy for the oppressed Poles, whose country was then partitioned among the Prussians, the Austrians, and the Russians, he could not bring himself to speak in favour of a Polish nation. The title of his travelogue *About Poland* might seem to suggest the opposite of this, since there literally existed no country called Poland at that time. Yet his sympathy for Polish nationalism was limited, and he writes here: "All the nations of Europe... will have to undergo this struggle to the death (the annihilation of their national existence) so that out of death may come forth life, and out of pagan nationality the Christian brotherhood of man" (495).

Heine's vision of a Europe without nations is most clearly enunciated in his *Journey from Munich to Genoa*. Here, in typical manner, as his coach passes the battlefield of Marengo in northern Italy (where Napoleon had defeated the Austrians

in 1800), he does not describe the physical scene, but reflects on the contours of a new Europe that he sees emerging from the chaos of the Napoleonic era. "The main lever that... princes could once employ... to their private ends, namely nationality with its pride and its hatreds, has now become rotten and derelict. Foolish national prejudices are disappearing more each day, all sharp differences are vanishing in the generality of European civilization, and there are no longer any nations in Europe, only parties" (220). This seems a very modern statement, to be sure, though, lamentably, it was not at all accurate for the Europe of Heine's day or after, which had by no means seen the end of destructive nationalism.

In his views on the second main theme to be examined here, namely the aristocracy, Heine reveals himself a child of the French Revolution and the Enlightenment in his unwavering opposition to the power, influence, and very existence of the nobility. He speaks against it in principle in more or less all of his travelogues, and he also draws many devastating caricatures of aristocratic individuals and types - to cite but one example, the group of aristocratic visitors to the Hofkirche in Innsbruck described in *Journey from Munich to Genoa* (179 -180). In particular, he criticizes the nobility of Poland and of England in the context of a discussion of the semantics of "freedom." In *About Poland*, for instance, he claims that freedom for the Poles has meant in effect freedom for the numerous nobility simply to act as they please. "Those freedoms," he writes (meaning Polish aristocratic privileges), "[t]hose freedoms must go, so that universal freedom under the law may thrive" (496). At greater length, in his *English*

Fragments, he attacks the concept of freedom then guaranteed under English law. All classes in England wanted, but especially the nobility profited from, the English concept of individual liberty. To this Heine opposes the French Revolutionary practice of social equality, which even at the expense of individual freedom had literally reduced aristocrats to the same size as other mortals - by means of the guillotine, of course. He sees a solution to the Europe-wide problem of nobility not in the wholesale use of the guillotine, however, but in the abolition of class privilege. Privilege for Heine, it should be noted, meant *aristocratic* privilege, and as yet he shows little awareness in his *Travel Pictures* of the privileges of middle-class capital, for example, which would become the main target of Marx's assaults as the nineteenth century advanced.

State religion was a third object of Heine's attacks. To be sure, he is capable of painting scenes of genuine religious piety in *Travel Pictures* - for instance, in his portrayal in *The City of Lucca* of a poor and ragged monk (317-318) or of the venerable old archbishop celebrating mass (333). Yet he is relentless in his assaults on organized state religion throughout the travelogues. In his *English Fragments* he attacks English Anglicanism in particular, with its devastating consequences for the economy and liberty of Ireland (408-414). He is no less scathing in his condemnation of continental Catholicism (both in Germany and Italy), which he links with political and social reaction and Restoration in Europe after 1815. A notable instance of this is provided by his description of the sinister, conspiratorial meeting between a priest and a nobleman at an inn in Brixen in *Journey from*

Munich to Genoa (181-182). It should be noted, however, that it is not religion as such that Heine deplors, but the Europe-wide links between state religion and political oppression.

Overarching these three negatives (of nationalism, aristocracy, and state religion) is a fourth European perspective in the *Travel Pictures* - namely Heine's positive commitment to historical progress. His views on the driving force of Ideas (with a capital "I") in history derive largely from Hegel, whose lectures on the philosophy of history he had heard in part (1822-1823) when he was a student in Berlin. Heine sees history, more narrowly European history, dominated by what Hegel calls the "World Spirit" - by modern Ideas typically embodied in great individuals. For Heine, the World Spirit in his age had been embodied in Napoleon. That is why he so emphatically admires the French emperor, who is presented in *Journey from Munich to Genoa* as a mythical figure like Prometheus (219), or even as a god-like or Christ-like figure, as in *Ideas. The Book of Le Grand* (127-129). Hence, though he knew that Napoleon had tried to restore the European aristocracy, and though aware of the destruction he had caused, Heine can write on the field of Marengo: "I never praise individual deeds, only the human spirit. The deed is only the garment of the spirit, and history is no more than the old wardrobe of the human spirit. Yet sometimes we love old coats, and so I love the mantle of Marengo" (219-220). Such admiration for Napoleon reveals Heine's tendency to excessive intellectual abstraction and to ignore the sometimes devastating consequences of the practical working of *Ideas*.

Just how wrong Heine could get things in this context is also shown in the Marengo episode, where a travelling companion asks his opinion on Czar Nicholas I of Russia, who, first among Europe's monarchs, had intervened (in 1827) on the side of the Greeks in their war against the Turks (1821-1829). This intervention elicits Heine's praise because he sees the Russians as having been inspired not by imperialistic opportunism (as has generally been regarded as their motive), but by liberal ideas. The English, on the other hand, who had been slow to support the Greeks, are despised for their pragmatism (devoid, it appears, of any higher idealism): "Freedom has proceeded from historical precedents in England, and from principles in Russia. Like those precedents themselves, their spiritual results bear the stamp of the Middle Ages in England. All England is frozen in medieval institutions, incapable of rejuvenation... Those principles, however, from which Russian freedom has emerged... are the liberal ideas of our modern age" (225). This was surely a grave misjudgment of the Russian situation, as Heine later came to realize.⁶ It also represented a serious underestimation of the flexibility of English pragmatism, as reflected, for instance, only shortly after the appearance of *English Fragments*, in the passing of the liberal Reform Bill of 1832.

Heine's emphasis on the importance of Ideas for European progress could make him blind to the content of those ideas. At a later point in his life, namely in his *Zur Geschichte de Religion und Philosophie in Deutschland* (*On the History of Religion and Philosophy in Germany*) (1834), he conceded as much, suggesting the outcome for Europe might be calamitous should the Germans ever be inspired with the

ideas not of French Enlightenment, but of Germanic paganism.⁷ Such insights into the consequences of a commitment to ideas per se are as yet lacking in *Travel Pictures*, however.

Hegelian idealism becomes linked with internationalism, liberationist politics, and religion in the last of Heine's travelogues, his *English Fragments*. Here he articulates the grand notion of a Religion of freedom: "[The old gods] have died, and our age does not have the imagination to create new ones. All the strength in the human breast is now turned toward freedom, and perhaps freedom is the religion of the new age" (361). He elaborates somewhat ironically on the imagery of this Religion of Freedom at the end of the *English Fragments*: "Freedom is a new religion, the religion of our time. Even though Christ is not the God of this religion, He is one of its High Priests... The French, however, are the chosen people of this new religion. In their language are set down its first gospels and dogmas, Paris is the New Jerusalem, and the Rhine is the Jordan separating the Promised Land of freedom from the land of the Philistines" (424-425). With these words Heine concludes his *Travel Pictures* proper. Three years after writing them, he himself crossed the Rhine into the Promised Land and its New Jerusalem, where he continued to write particularly on France and Germany, but in the context of Europe as a whole. Already present in essence in his *Travel Pictures*, however, are his views on Europe - conveying not a complete or wholly accurate picture of his age or of ours, to be sure, but a vision (yet to be fully realized) of a Europe without nations, without class privilege, wholly secular, and open to change.

Notes

1. Willfried Feuser, "Von Hinsbeck nach Nigeria. Mein Leben und Schaffen," *Heimatsbuch des Kreises Viersen* 1989 (1990), 46.
2. Parenthetical references are to Heinrich Heine, *Sämtliche Werke*, ed. Jost Perfahl et al, 4 vols. (Winkler: Munich, 1969 -1972), II. All translations from the German are by Edward Mornin.
3. Heine, *Sämtliche Werke*, IV, 706.
4. As a travelogue, *About Poland* is usually published together with Heine's *Travel Pictures* today - for example, in the popular Goldmann edition of the *Travel Pictures* (ed. Ursula Roth. Munich, 1982). The most useful in-depth discussion of Heine's travelogues is to be found in Jost Hwermand, *Der Frühe Heine. Ein Kommentar zu den "Reisebildern"* (Winkler: Munich, 1976). There exists no one study on the European perspectives of Heine's travelogues, though Heine's views on Europe inevitably receive some coverage in any of the major works of criticism.
5. A characterization of the style and structure of Heine's *Travel Pictures* is to be found in Peter J. Brenner, *Der Reisebericht in der deutschen Literatur. Eine Forschungsübersicht als vorstudie zu einer Gattungsgeschichte* (Niemeyer: Tübingen, 1990), 264 -278.
6. In the Introduction to *Kahldorf über den Adel* (*Kahldorf on the Aristocracy*) of 1831, in which Heine views Nicholas I as a supporter of aristocratic privilege (*Sämtliche Werke*, IV, 511-512).
7. Heine, *Sämtliche Werke*, III, 517-518.

16. Goethe and the Crisis of Change in ‘Auf dem See’, (“On the Lake”)

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Introduction

The poem “Auf dem See”¹ was written by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe in 1775 on a tour to Switzerland as he tried to run away from his amorous entanglements with Lili Schönemann. This was shortly before he left Frankfurt for Weimar on the invitation of the Duke of Weimar. The poem has been classified as a romantic poem on nature in harmony with the resort to nature, which is an element of the advocacy of the *Sturm university Drang*-movement. It focuses on such elements as landscape, lake, stars, hills, etc. It is regarded as expressing a conflict in Goethe to choose between Lili Schönemann and his predilection for nature and fantasy.² However, by symbolic extension, the poem goes beyond just a romantic expression of the impact of nature on the mind or an expression of just the conflict indicated above. A closer look at it opens a different dimension still on the platform of conflict. It is an expression of the most fundamental turning point in the life of and subsequent works of Goethe himself – the man who was to become the most renowned German writer past and present. It is a turning point in the experience of the author at a time of uncertainties, in a crossroads situation. It also reveals a turning away from, and an

advocacy in reaction to, the *Haltung* of the *Sturm und Drang* towards the societal order of his time. Garland et al. report:

*In September the engagement with Lili was broken off, and for a variety of reasons, including a certain impatience with his Sturm und Drang cronies, Goethe gladly accepted an invitation to visit the young Duke of Saxe-Weimar.*³

Following Arvon's argument, that the characteristics of the artistic productions of a given period stand in the closest causal relationship to the social mentality expressed in it,⁴ it will not be out of place to opine that Goethe had also his society in view in this poem. This we hope to elucidate as we study the poem.

While focusing on himself and the conflict that he was experiencing, consciously or otherwise, Goethe deals with an issue that concerns every human in the poem – the stance “*Haltung*” we maintain in life in relation to circumstances, people, belief, etc. with regard to change. In other words, conservatism. Conservatism being, in a sense, the dislike of change more especially a sudden change, the willingness to yield or to succumb to the pressure for change becomes varied depending on individuals and the issues in question. The sensations, experiences, inspirations, etc. which are the outcomes of our interaction with our environments manifest from time-to-time and keep tugging on us seeking attention. The intruding stimulus, which we would like to identify in this paper as vexation, distraction or interference, is the initiator of whatever will possibly bring any change in the

stance of any human, societal or institutional personality depending on the reaction it elicits. A scriptural verse illustrates to a reasonable extent what we are going to see in this poem.⁵

*Let us go up against Judah and vex it, and let us make a breach therein for us, and set a king in the midst of it...*⁶

An exploration of the poem “Auf dem See” promises to reveal the manifestation of reason-oriented conservatism.

It has earlier been stated that the poem was written in a literary period in Germany designated as the *Sturm und Drang* (Storm and Stress). Those who identified with this literary trend, the *Stürmer und Dränger* as they were called, were people who believed in man being ruled by the propensities that lie within him; by the forces within him as a being instead of being ruled and governed by the rules, laws and regulations laid down by the society.⁷ Roy Pascal puts it this way: “Man exists in their view, to be himself, intensely to develop all his powers to the full. All limitations are bad.”⁸ This *Geniekult* (cult of Genius), as they were also referred to, maintained that there are potentials in man, which are being robbed of full development as a result of the crippling societal order. This order constituted by mores, norms, tradition and customs, which are embodied in the educational system, in the cultural and social life of the society as well as the principles and practices of religion, are conceived as intimidating the genius in man. The view they hold of religion is that “its reality and values lie in liberating all the inner capacities of men,”⁹ and of the educational system they

maintained that it should not be “the imposition of adult thoughts on the child, but the awakening of ideas that sleep in us”.¹⁰

On account of these views, the *Stürmer und Dränger* maintained a stance of hostile variance to the social order in their environment. In principle and in practice, they agreed with almost nothing in the society and thereby discredited every principle and practice prevalent in the society. They saw their society as principle- and theory laden, but devoid of practice and action. They sought and advocated a practical dimension to every human sensation and experience. In this *Haltung*, they disengaged themselves from the society to seek and create a world where their conception of freedom would become a reality. The *Geniekult* was usually regarded as the “young rebels of the Sturm und Drang”.¹¹ In this way, the *Stürmer und Dränger* had to seek refuge in an ideal but unreal world.

An evaluation of the principles, philosophy and practice of the *Geniekult* reveals the inability of their activities to transcend the realm of the psychic and yield to that of reality and action. Their belief and advocacy could not be translated into reality. The chasm between the ‘ideal’ to which the *Stürmer und Dränger* are bound and the ‘real’ from which they are divorced plunged them into a state of quagmire and frustration. Roy reports:

The dilemma was a real one. In the petty stagnant circumstances of Germany, there seemed no outlet for

*the man who, driven by strong feeling would impress his personality on the surrounding world.*¹²

Thus, instead of the reality of the philosophy of the *Stürmer und Dränger* coming alive in the society as they yearned for and sought to actualize, we rather have the reality of a tragic incompatibility between so rich an inner life and the practical life for which it hungers and cannot fit itself.¹³

In spite of the shortcomings of the *Sturm und Drang* evidenced by its disinterestedness in political organizations; its lack of outlet to transcend the realm of feelings and emotions; its having neither the agenda nor the formula for social and religious information, thereby failing to influence life in reality, certain of its members, for example Reinhold Lenz, Heinrich von Kleist among others, refused to compromise their *Haltung* towards life and society. Their world could be summed up in the words of Coyle et al.:

*We are confronted with the inexplicable fact, or the no less inexplicable appearance, of a world travailing for perfection but bringing to birth, together with glorious good, an evil which it is able to overcome by self-torture and self-waste.*¹⁴

This could be seen as a clear demonstration of “emotion and sentiment-oriented conservatism”, whereby reason fails to effect a change in one’s stance.

If the foregoing provides a general background to this paper, it is logical to inquire about how the work of Goethe can be

understood in the light of this background and in relation to his generation.

The crisis of change reflected in the poem

Goethe, as a member of this *Geniekult* shared in the *Haltung* of the *Stürmer und Dränger* towards the societal order of their time. This is evidenced in the following lines from “Prometheus”.

*Bedecke deinen Himmel, Zeus,
Mit Wolkendunst*

...

*Hier sitz ich, forme Menschen
Nach meinem Bilde,
(Cover your sky, Zeus,
With vaporous clouds*

...

*Here I sit, making men
in my own image)¹⁵*

In his *Leiden des Jungen Werthers*, this *Haltung* is also traceable in the argument, which Werther had with Albert. Werther's arguments are in sharp contrast with what the society upholds as moral values.¹⁶ Werther declares: “We are educated and our education has rendered us good for nothing”.¹⁷ In the poem, we could notice a metamorphosis of Goethe's *Haltung*. It now tends more towards practical reason that finds bearing on reality away from the kind of reasoning he presented in the argument with Albert.¹⁸ He

breaks the cyst of “emotional and sentimental conservatism”. In the first line of the poem, Goethe declares:

*Und frische Nahrung, neues Blut
Saug ich aus freier Welt;
(And fresh nourishment and new Blood
I suck from this free world).*

We are informed that in September 1775, the Duke of Saxony-Weimar – Carl August invited Goethe to Weimar.¹⁹ In this invitation, we see the interference that comes into the order of life of an individual, a society or an institution, bringing about a distraction. This invitation was a form of vexation, which released the recipient from a wholesome absorption in whatever he was doing. It caused him to look up from what he was doing and look around him. It awakened his consciousness to another world apart from the one on which he was concentrating at that point in time. It is like the ray of light that steals into the dark cell of the prisoner used to the darkness of his cell to awaken his consciousness to the existence of daylight. The interference that Goethe experienced triggered off a line of thought thereby “making a breach”. This was so because Goethe’s *Haltung* towards the *Sturm und Drang* was reason-oriented. A vexation that makes a breach is one that becomes a subject of consideration in a person’s life. Now, whether a new “king” would be placed there or not depends on the decision arrived at after a due consideration of the vexation. What decision did Goethe arrive at?

He speaks of “*Frishe Nahrung*”, “*neues Blut*” und “*freier Welt*”. These adjectives attributively depict a deviation from what has been prevalent. They show a contrastive relationship whereby the former had been *alte* (old) *Nahrung*, *alte* (old) *Blut* and *beeinschränkende* (restrictive) *Welt*”. By this declaration, Goethe seemed to have passed an unfavorable judgement on the ‘world’ in which he had been living, the fantasy ‘world’ of the *Sturm und Drang*, even though he had conceived of it as a ‘paradise’. In paying due attention to it, he was able to see well and more clearly and was further able to take the decision which was pro-Weimar. One of the principal things that helped Goethe take the decision was that he saw a reason to leave the old ‘world’ of the *Sturm und Drang*.

He saw the old ‘world’, which had so far existed as the “*freie Welt*” to the *Stürmer und Dränger*, turn out to be the “prison-world”, while the real world which had been existing as a prison for them turned out to be the “*freie Welt*”. Hence the attributes “*frische*”, “*neues*”, “*freier*”.

Goethe brings in the role of fate and nature in the experiences of man as he attributes these developments to nature:

*Wie ist Natur so hold und gut
 Die mich am Busen hält!
 Die Welle wiegert unsern Kahn
 Im Rudertakt hinauf
 (How is nature so sweet and kindly
 That holds me to her breast
 The wave rocks our boat upwards
 In harmony with the Oars).*

Goethe here displays his trust and belief in fate and nature. He seems to be saying that nature rules itself and exacts its will upon us, thus determining our fate. And in his submission to the will of nature, which has opened the way for this new development, he seemed to be advocating the supremacy of nature over human manipulations, manoeuvres and calculations and, as a result, a complete yielding to nature. He sees nature in chance and this prompted him to accept the invitation calling him to Weimar.²⁰ "Nature is perfect and anything it gives is good", he seems further to be saying. He expresses gratitude towards nature for what it has brought his way, which is the opportunity to know the '*freie Welt*' from which he now sucks in '*frische Nahrung*' and gains '*neues Blut*'. This is Goethe, a *Stürmer und Dränger*, expressing delight in a development that is likely to challenge his *Sturm und Drang Haltung*. As earlier pointed out, the position of the *Stürmer und Dränger* towards the established societal order is in sharp variance, and the life in an aristocratic court was an epitome of this order – a life of whats, hows, whens and wheres both in isolation and interwoven with little or no room for compromise.

In this "*freier Welt*" of rigid order he still sees something better than what he has in the "*beeinschränkende Welt*" he has been living in. The "*Welle*" here is a symbol of nature which the "*Ruder*" is the finger of nature steering the "*Kahn*", which is the fate in which the individual is wrapped up. Nature with its finger pushes the "*Kahn hinan*f" (upwards) where Goethe sees a better future.

This new value system we are seeing in Goethe is as a result of the open-mindedness with which he had come to regard his beliefs. This open-mindedness in turn springs from the reason-orientedness of his *Haltung*. What we are therefore witnessing in Goethe cannot be witnessed in an individual who is emotionally and sentimentally conservative. This is because emotion and sentiment stifle the voice of reason.

Taking a step into the unusual is what demystifies the thicket of uncertainties beclouding any unusual phenomenon. There is usually an initial reluctance in the individual, which stems from three possible sources – the disequilibrium that follows the recognition and consideration of the vexation (the unusual) as against the state of equilibrium that one enjoys with the usual; the thicket of uncertainties that envelopes the unusual, and the discouraging voices from people that we are involved with.

Goethe allows us a glimpse of this in his case in the following lines:

*Die Welle wiegert unsern Kahn ...
Und Berge, wolkig himmelan
Begegnen unserm Lauf
(The wave rocks our boat...
And mountains cloudy skywards
Rise on our path).*

He uses the rocking (Wiegern) of the boat to depict this state of disequilibrium. Goethe was a burgher. The implication of this is that, should he decide for Weimar, he would have a

reasonable measure of re-adjustment, adaptation and re-orientation to go through; a shedding off of the burgher lifestyle, which he had been so used to on the one hand and a picking up of the court life on the other hand. This means a compromise of the *Sturm und Drang* philosophy of *Leben nach eigenem Gefühle, Leben nach dem inneren Zwang* (living according to personal feelings. Living according to innate tendencies) to adapt to the rigid straight jacketed order of court life. In the face of this possible disequilibrium, Goethe was being pragmatic. It is like recognizing and evaluating the cost before venturing in. This period of delay/reluctance offers the individual the time to prepare himself for the demand which the unusual environment and circumstances he is about to go into will make on him. The benefit of this is that he does not end up an "old wine in a new bottle" which breaks the bottle or an "old piece of cloth on a new garment" which tears the garment.²¹ With time he fits into the new system without any undue and upsetting projections. We see this in operation as Roy comments on Goethe in Weimar:

*But he himself began to change. From the beginning he had been able to fit himself into the requirements of court life, and had respected the outer forms, the class conventions, [...]. The change grew greater as he began to take an active interest in the affairs of the little state [...].*²²

He becomes an asset and not a liability in the new environment. Here we see an advocacy for the integration of an individual into the society. If a society exists in which

everyone insists on living according to personal propensities, such a society will definitely be so chaotic that its continuity will not be certain. No one can be an island unto himself no matter how wonderful the ideologies and philosophies of such a one is.

Goethe refers to the second level of this reluctance in the expression:

*Berge wolkig himmelan,
Begegnen unserm Laufe.*

“Mountains skywards and cloudy on our path” depict a hindrance on both our course of movement and vision. A mountain on the way is no doubt a hindrance, but for us to get to our destination we have to get past the mountain. And to get over the mountain one needs to explore upwards to determine whether there is a way that leads up or not. However, in the situation presented in the poem, there is another hindrance – the cloud that envelops the mountain. This does not allow for a visual exploration of the mountain. This leaves the individual with the option of finding the footings one after the other as he progresses. Again, this mountain is “*himmelan*” (skywards). The import of this is that however one tries, one fails to see far off enough not to talk of seeing what lies on the other side of the mountain. That is to say, until one gets up the mountain one cannot see what lies beyond it. This is the thicket of uncertainties, which exerts pressure on one and tries to fan the ember of reluctance into the flame of refusal. Goethe recognizes this himself in Werther’s declaration that “it is characteristic for our human

spirit to suspect that all is confusion and darkness where we know nothing for certain.”²³

The allusion to the third source of this reluctance, which has been identified above is found still in the two words “*Berge... himmelan*”. This could be the discouragement, which comes from people and circumstances that we are involved with. “*Himmelan*” expresses the degree to which this involvement magnifies itself as an obstacle in the course of his taking a decision. This is what we usually experience when we are faced with the question of taking a decision that will involve relocation in whatever sense. In practical life, following the changing trend of events and how they affect us, there is always the need for us to change our *Haltung* – from one business to another, from one profession to another, from one place to another, from one belief system to another and from one group of friends to another. As we break the cyst of comfort, convenience and complacency offered by the ‘usual’ in order to give due attention to the ‘unusual’, these obstacles – disequilibrium, uncertainties and discouraging voices are always waiting for us on the way that leads to the ‘unusual’.

Goethe was faced with this kind of problem as we have already seen, but how did he handle these obstacles?

*Aug, mein Aug, was sinkst du nieder?
Goldnen Träume, kommt ihr wieder?
Weg, du Traum! So gold du bist:
Hier auch Lieb und Leben ist.
(Oh my eyes, why are you drooping?
Are you returning you golden dreams?*

*Be gone, dream, golden as you are !
Here also there is love and life.)*

In this stanza we see that Goethe has not just decided but is also resolved to go ahead with his plan. He did not allow the *Wiegern* of his boat; he did not allow the “*Berge himmelan*”, and he did not allow the “*wolkig*” to hinder him. He strides on in defiance to the scare of disequilibrium, the intimidation of uncertainties and the pressure of discouraging voices. Roy writes:

He thus cut through the entanglements with Lili – he had fled from Friederike and Lotte in the same way. He broke with all social ties in Frankfurt, with his own circle and interests, which had become such a net around him. He removed himself from the looming responsibilities of burgher occupations, from the moral pressures, which a settled position would have entailed.²⁴

One may wonder why Goethe’s eyes started to droop after he had resolved to go on and having overcome all the hindrances on his way as seen above. This draws attention to the next obstacle that he faced – nostalgia. However, this obstacle, unlike the others already discussed, is not a reluctance-generating one. Rather it is a withdrawal-generating one. It has the potential of making someone change one’s mind or reverse one’s decision. Looking back at the “former” with affection normally elicits nostalgia, which could cause a change of mind. The Bible represents this situation in the following way: “And truly if they had been mindful of that

country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned.”²⁵

As earlier pointed out, the *Stürmer und Dränger* were people whose adopted way of life made them a kind of island in relation to society.

*Da eine Befriedigung des Tatendranges in wirklichen Leben unter dem Despotismus nicht möglich war, schuf man sich den Ausweg einer wenigstens schriftstellerischen Betätigung und theoretischer Bemühungen um die Lösung der wesentlich moralisch gesehenen Aufgaben der Politik, während zugleich die wirklich kraftvollen Charaktere ihr “tinten-klecksendes Säkulum” zu hassen begannen.*²⁶

In this imaginary world of theirs, they found fulfillment, found the essence of life and living, and found everything that the ‘real’ world (human society) lacked. It is a world in fantasy. Goethe, who had already defied all the hindrances that came his way up to this point, saw himself now drifting into nostalgic fantasy. These *Goldnen Träume* (golden dreams) did not just register on Goethe’s mind, but also juxtaposed themselves with the life that he was contemplating adopting. The purpose of this juxtaposition was to burlesque the ‘reality world’ in order to rekindle the initial hatred he had for it. The “*Goldnen Träume*” presents a mockery of the ‘real world’. However, Goethe looked beyond the veil of *Sturm und Drang* to see “*Lieb und Leben*” here also.

In this declaration “*Hier auch Lieb und Leben ist*”, Goethe gives us a picture of the world that he is moving into – a world where there is life and love. There may not be ‘gold’ in this world, but there is something that is more than gold in it – ‘life, love and freedom’. That this optimism was realised we see expressed thus:

At the court he had something of the position of a noble man, and was in fact soon to be ennobled; and this position meant much, it meant he could disregard moral pedancy [sic] and burgher scandalmongers, it meant freedom for his own taste and pursuit. As a favorite of a prince, much was allowed him that no burgher in a burgher environment could enjoy.²⁷

Goethe presents these two phenomena – love, life and freedom – as the most important things to any individual and he does this with the purpose of playing down the trumpeted ‘shortcomings’ of this “reality world”. He first seems to be saying that where there is life, love and freedom, all the shortcomings of the society will collapse. This foreseen experience turned out to be a reality in Goethe’s life at Weimar. He declared himself:

I am now involved in all the court and political squabbles and shall hardly be able to get away. My position here is advantageous enough, and the Duchies of Weimar and Eisenach are after all a stage on which to see how one likes cutting a figure in the world. So I’m not going to be overhasty. And the main conditions of

*my new form of life will be freedom and contentment,
[...].*²⁸

Goethe, in spite of all the obstacles, decided for the world of reality 'here' against the world of fantasy 'there'. He banishes the disarming feelings of nostalgia "*Weg, du Traum! So gold du bist*". He found an equivalent to the 'goldenness' of the dreams "*freie Welt, ... Lieb und Leben*" and with this he was well able to counter the dream effectively to win his freedom. We see Goethe once more acting on reason. The reason he has found that prompted his decision is weightier and more valuable compared to the reason for which he had held onto the dreams and fantasies of the illusory world of the *Sturm und Drang*. It is these reasons that sustained him against the encroachment of the 'usual' – environment, people and experience. When an individual takes a decision based on reasons that are relatively tenable, he is less likely to be tossed about, he is more stable in his resolve and more able to withstand the emotional enticements of the compromised stance – the usual.

In the last stanza of the poem, Goethe seems to have yielded his entire being – spirit, soul and body – to the unfolding prospect of Weimar. His projections become the more romantic:

*Auf der Welle blinken
Tausende schwebende Sterne
(On the water drift and glitter
Thousands of stars).*

He seems to have tuned up his soul, his spirit and his body in readiness to receive that which this new prospect has to offer. The importance of this complete yielding cannot be overemphasized. It gives him the eyes with which he could see the treasures in the new prospect without any proactive inhibitions from his background. He is now completely liberated and he now looks forward.

The appearance of “*Sterne*” (stars) here has the import of time, definitely speaking of the evening. By this he seems to be saying that he has come to the evening of the old – the evening of the frustrating, constraining and illusory life of the *Sturm und Drang*. Just as the evening of any day suggests its end, so does the evening of an event or a state of being depict an imminent end. However, the end of one day ushers in another day. What is this unfolding day going to be like? The *tausende ... Sterne* that ‘drift and glitter’ present a beauty that assures of a better tomorrow. That means the day that is dawning is going to be a day full of promises, a day full of hope, a day full of good things. A glorious day. Goethe here calls into play, the *Sturm und Drang* philosophy, in which nature is believed to play a determinant role in the fate of mankind depending on its mood. “The moods of nature are a symbol and a solace for the rapture and distress of St. Preux [...] as the Scottish mountains and mist are for the calamities of Ossien.”²⁹

Goethe continues to decipher significance from the mood of nature in the following lines:

*Weiche Nebel trinken
Rings die türmende Ferne
(Soft clouds drink up
The towering skyline).*

In this line, we see a reappearance of some elements we had seen on the penultimate line of the first stanza – *Berge wolzig himmelan*. However, their role now is no more one of hindrance, but one of encouragement and assurance. The mountain so high and clad in the intimidating mystery of the thick cloud is now demystified in the transparency of the *Weiche Nebel*, (soft clouds) which drinks up the *türmende Ferne* (towering skyline).

In the foregoing discussion, we see a general transformation of phenomena. Goethe was the first to undergo this transformation as he changed from an unfriendly *Haltung* towards the societal order to adopt it as his way of life. As he yielded himself without bias and without reservations, every other thing metamorphosed into a facilitator. The implication of this is that impossibilities exist, problems seem insurmountable, and huddles seem unassailable when we have not made up our minds to take a “defiant” step. There should first of all be a readiness in the individual to react to the call for a change – vexation – and a determination to evaluate the vexation without bias to determine if it is worth giving a try. When this is done, every other thing on the way becomes a stepping stone.

With the “*türmende Ferne*” drunk up by the “*Weiche Nebel*”, Goethe could not see farther and more clearly; he could now

see what lies on the other side. He could now see where he was going. However, the next line says:

*Morgenwind umflügeln
Die beschattete Bucht,
(Morning breeze spreads its wings
Round the shadowed bay).*

Although he could now see where he was going, the features of it are still blurred by a defacing shadow. This defacing shadow could be seen in the nature of the invitation, which he got from Weimar of which it is said “[...] without defined responsibilities.”³⁰

In any case, the “*Morgenwind*” is already there to dissipate the shadow that engulfs the “*Bucht*”. Then will everything become clear. Looking at the symbol *Morgenwind*, one tends to develop the idea of something that refreshes, soothes and reinvigorates confidence and gingers one up for action. In this, Goethe could be talking of the *genie* in him. In the role assigned to the “*Morgenwind*” – “*umflügelt die beschattete Bucht*” – Goethe could be expressing the confidence he has in his capabilities and wit to wrap in the Weimar Court and people and to carve out for himself a ‘defined responsibility’.

In the action of the “*Morgenwind*”, we see nature again, but this time not determining or driving, neither is it communicating nor assuring, but rather rendering service. In assigning roles to ‘mother nature’, Goethe once more reinforces the philosophy of the *Sturm und Drang* that nature is inalienable from life. Roy comments:

[...] nature is to them a living organism of which they are part, whose energy thrills throughout their own being, with which they are connected directly through all their emotions and instincts. Nature is the mother from whom they are sprung, the nurse on whom they depend for sustenance.³¹

In the foregoing analysis, Goethe seems to be saying that nature, personal wit and determination form an alliance that cannot be intimidated by any circumstances; it takes boldness, it takes self-confidence, it takes faith in nature to venture into the unknown, into the unusual to conquer it and take out of it that which it takes to make the best out of life. In the last two lines of the poem:

*Und im See bespiegelt
Sich die reifende Frucht.
(And on the lake reflects
itself the ripening fruit).*

we see Goethe, who, having completed a circuit of mental projections into the rehearsal of what he foresees lies in his future in Weimar, seems to be saying – it is good. Here again he brings in the determining and communicative role of the mood of nature. All the hopes, all the aspirations, all the expectations that are built into the sojourn in Weimar are encased in the inspirations communicated by the mood of nature which is the flamboyance of the lake with the glittering and drifting stars.

Conclusion

This poem, which though by content and experience, revolves around Goethe, expressing a fundamental transition in his life,³² is, by appreciation and analytical extension, a reflection of what goes on in the life of an entity – human being, establishment or society – when faced with the challenge of taking a fundamental decision that could tremendously influence the course of life. The decision to be taken must have a coming-from or going-to bearing on the person's environment – immediate or remote. Taylor argues that:

*Inasmuch as an artist is as subject to the social realities of his day as his contemporaries from other works of life, and inherits the same constellation of social and cultural circumstances as they do, there is a necessary interaction between him and his environment, whether he eagerly seeks the raw materials of his art from this environment or whether he withdraws from it in fear, anger, despair, or in the name of realities of a different order.*³³

On this premise we see beyond the conflicts of his love affairs with *Frau Schöнемann* upto the society of Goethe as a target audience in this poem. His advocacy is reason-oriented *Haltung* and a constant reason-oriented evaluation of our *Haltung* so as to allow for necessary adjustments to attain a higher and a better level of existence.

It is only in the land of the dead, from the perspective of the living that everything is still. But in the land of the living,

change is a constant phenomenon. The vexation, which is the forerunner of the call for change could be experienced by any entity and this vexation could be in any area of human experience – faith, culture, location or belief system. This vexation could be calling for a change in direction or a change in degree, intensity or magnitude at which a thing is carried out; it could be calling for a change in the manner of executing a belief, a process or a concept. The inferred advocacy of this poem from the perspective of this paper is a positive attitude towards the vexation that we experience from time-to-time so as to identify the necessary adjustments to make in our modes of life in order to attain a better and higher level of living.

The change of the “culture” of an individual, an institution, a society etc. could bring a tremendous change to the fate, destiny and history of the entities associated with it. Goethe, having relocated from Frankfurt to Weimar and from the *Haltung* of *Sturm und Drang* to the recognition, appreciation and acceptance of the societal mode of life (even as practised in the court), today has the honour of inaugurating, with Schiller, Sartre and a few others, the classical period of German literature. Today Goethe is an epitome of German scholasticism and in Europe he ranks among the greatest scholars and thinkers. That everyone has a stance that one maintains in life is not out of place. However, one important question one should ask oneself is – In what direction does my stance tend? Does it tend towards the constructive or the destructive, towards the positive or the negative? Be it as it may, these questions can only arise in the case of a reason-

oriented conservatism, which Goethe advocates for himself, his *Sturm und Drang* cronies, his society and all.

A society, an individual or an establishment that does not recognize the vexation that it experiences as a call for change is one that is destined to perish in the archaism of time. As Okonkwo J.I. says: “[...] the dislocation of the old ways is inevitable and even welcome for any culture that is isolated and deprived of the cross fertilizing influences from without soon atrophies”.³⁴

Notes

¹ David Luke (ed.), *Goethe: Selected Verse*. (Reading: Penguin Books Ltd. (1987), 32.

² Henry and Mary Garland, *The Oxford Companion to German Literature*. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976), 43.

³ *ibid.* p. 290.

⁴ Henri Arvon, *Marxist Esthetics*. (Translation). (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press 1973), x.

⁵ All biblical quotations are taken from the King James Version of the World Bible Publishers, 1986.

⁶ The Bible. Isaiah Chapter 7 verse 6.

⁷ Diether Raff, *Deutsche Geschichte vom Altem Reich zur Zweiten Republik*. (München: Max Hueber Verlag, 1985), 45.

⁸ Roy, Pascal, *The German Sturm und Drang*. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1967), 134.

⁹ *ibid.* (1967; 125).

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- ¹⁰ *ibid.* (1967; 153).
- ¹¹ Jethro Bithel, *Germany a Companion to German Studies*. (London: Methuene and Co. Ltd. 1968), 247.
- ¹² *ibid.* (1967; 149).
- ¹³ *ibid.* (1967; 151).
- ¹⁴ Martin Coyle et. al. (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Literature and Criticism*. (London: Routledge 1991), 366.
- ¹⁵ David Luke (ed.), *Goethe, Selected Verse*. (England: Penguin Books Limited, 1987), 17.
- ¹⁶ Johann W.V. Goethe, *The Sorrows of Young Werther*. (Translation). (Penguin Books Ltd. 1989), 59-64.
- ¹⁷ *ibid.* (1989; 92).
- ¹⁸ *ibid.* (1989; 59-64).
- ¹⁹ Klaus Seehafer, *Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Poet, Scientist, Statesman*. (Born: Inter Nationes, 1999), 15.
- ²⁰ Magill, C.P., *German Literature*. (London: Oxford University Press, 1974). 48.
- ²¹ *The Bible*. Matthew Chapter 9 verses 16-17.
- ²² Roy, (1967; 30).
- ²³ Goethe, (1989; 113).
- ²⁴ Roy, (1967; 29).
- ²⁵ *The Bible*: Hebrews Chapter 11 verse 15.
- ²⁶ The particulars of the source of this information was lost. However, it was quoted from a German Literatur Lexicon.
- ²⁷ Roy, (1967; 29).
- ²⁸ *ibid.* (1967; 30).
- ²⁹ *ibid.* (1967; 192).
- ³⁰ *ibid.* (1967; 29).
- ³¹ *ibid.* (1967; 191).
- ³² Ronald Gray, *Poems of Goethe*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1966), xv.

- ³³ Roland Taylor, *Literature and Society in Germany 1918-1945*. (Sussex: The Harvester Press, 1980), ix.
- ³⁴ Okonkwo, J.I., "Ekwensi and The Something New and Unstable" In *Modern Nigerian Culture*, in Nwoga, D.I., *Literature and Modern West African Culture*. (Benin City: Ethiope Publishing Corporation, 1978), 132.

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17. Niyi Osundare's Poetry and Contemporary Historical Reality

Effiok B. Uwatt

Introduction: Relationship between Poetry and History

The relationship between History and Poetry has long been established way back as the classical era. Aristotle in *The Poetics* (1963:17) while acclaiming poetry above history distinguished the latter as dealing with the particular and the former, with the universal. This distinction consists in the methods of these art forms.

During the neo-classical period, Sir Philip Sidney (1973:644) in "Defense of Poesy" set the poet apart from other artists – the philosopher and the historian. Whereas the knowledge of the philosopher borders on the abstract and the general, the historian, wanting the precept, is so tied, not to what should be, but to what is, to the particular truth of the things. Like Aristotle, Sidney rated Poetry above Philosophy and History in method. This was for reason that whatever the historian and philosopher said should be done, the poet gives a perfect picture of it in someone by whom he presupposed it was so. So the poet couples the general notion with the particular example.

Besides, both History and Poetry share common reservoir of source materials in contemporary reality, but what the historian looks for in history differs from that of the poet.

Whereas the historian looks for the truth in history, the poet looks for fiction; using the narration as handmaiden for creative imagination. Sidney (1973:644) emphasized this when he wrote:

*... as in history, looking for truth they go away full
fraught with falsehood, so in poesy, looking for fiction,
they shall use the narration but as an imaginative ground-
plot of a profitable invention.*

This paper examines the relationship between Osundare's poetry and contemporary history; the extent to which the poet uses the narration from history as handmaiden for poetic vision; as well as the devices employed in transforming history into poetry. Focus is placed on Osundare's poems, whose subject matters are based on real historical incidents, which revolve around real historical personage; within a particular identifiable time frame.

Niyi Osundare's Poetry and History

In Osundare's poetry, history is a most fathomless concept to grapple with. In *Songs of the Market Place* (1983), *Songs of the Seasons* (1990), and *Waiting Laughters* (1990), the poet variously expresses concern about incidents in contemporary history. If all these three volumes in general, and *Songs of the season*, in particular, are purposed "to capture the significant happenings of our times", *Horse of Memory* (1998) is intended for the conceptualization of history as memory of the past. In this volume, history is bestowed the dual feminine and masculine gender personages. From poem, to poem, the

more the poet confronts history face to face, the more he marvels at the complexity of history.

In “End of History”, for instance, the poet declares the fathomless nature of history:

*Today I look History in the face,
His/her brow a taut membrane of inexhaustible riddles*

Today I look History in the face

*And remember the child in the tale who touched the
elephant's tail vowing he had seen everything about the
giant of the forest. (Horses of Memory 51-52).*

Like the child in the mythic anecdote, the more the poet thought he understood history, the more he is confounded by its mystery. In “metamorphosis”, the tendency of historical figures to undergo transformation is expressed in the images of “sheep” and “wolf” purely in their benign and wild dispositions, respectively:

*Sometime
History enters the night
As a sheep
Waking up
As a wolf (114).*

In a poem like “shout of the people”, the sheep and wolf images express the above tendency. They represent the meek military or civilian ruler who maneuvers his way either by

might or by fraud into power as the peoples' messiah, but who overnight turns a tyrant. Such are the rulers who the poet sees in the poem as "Neophytes crashing in / from History's unwritten books/Getting bloated with power" (34).

In for "Festus Iyayi", recurrent incidents in history are represented in the image of an actor in a glassy room whose single image is reflected severally from different angles:

History
Is an actor
In a room
With a thousand mirrors (115).

From poem to poem, a perfect picture of an instance of history repeating itself is given in the recurrent cases of tyrants all over the continents of the world. It is from history also that the poet proffers consolation to the tyrannized people of the world; mainly that history always outlives the tyrant:

Tyranny
May be long
History is always
L
O
N
G
E
R. (115).

The longevity of history owes to its God-like enduring patience. But the patience of history must not be mistaken for cowardice or lack of might. For as the poet declares in "The stage and the mirror", in spite of its endurance;

*When History pulls the rug
Even emperors must sway and fall*

*Naked
In their countless robes.
(Horse of Memory, 98).*

To Osundare therefore, history from ideological standpoint, is recurrent social experiences and the struggle to outlive these experiences through socio-political alternatives.

Since Osundare conceptualizes history as "an actor/in a room/with a thousand mirrors", in his poetry, three broad historical experiences are variously acted out as the poet looks history in the face, namely, (1) European imperialism, (2) military and civilian governance, and (3) the scourge of tyrants.

European Imperialism

Niyi Osundare's concern with contemporary African history spans through almost four hundred years of European imperialism; from the exploration/ partitioning of African continent; to the slavery experience through colonialization up to the phase of the struggle for independence by African states.

In canto II of *Waiting Laughers* (1990:34), Osundare laments the travails of the historical experience of European imperialism, which he envisions to have proffered the continent more curses than blessing. This is expressed in the metaphor of

*The cry is
Deeper than
The wo
und*

The unusual syllabification of “wound” in the last two lines above suggests the depth of the cry, the resistance against imperialism. The conquistadors’ activities of the European nations are expressed in the excerpt below which is a parody of the renowned statement of the Roman conqueror of great Britain, Julius Caesar:

*The axe – man
Came
Saw
And nearly conquered (34).*

Osundare equally laments the slavery phase of European imperialism, the trans-Atlantic slave trade:

*The innocence of the Niger
Waiting waiting
Four hundred seasons
For the dispossessing twang of alien accents
For scrolls of serfdom, hieroglyphic of
Calculated treaties (37).*

The “innocence” of the first line refers to the prime essence of African cultural values before the advent of European imperialism; while “calculated treaties” suggests not only the treaties of subjugation but also economic exploitation and the trade treaties. The “Niger” here as well as “Bussa”, “Nile”, “Limpopo” and “Kilimanjaro” in the excerpt following, all representing the hidden mystery of Africa and her history, reveal the poet’s use of allusion to place names and geographical features in expression of the hazards which European conquerors encountered in their conquistador’s mission:

Waiting

For a history which snails towards the coast

A delta of meandering dreams

Waiting

For the bubbles of Bussa

Where rock riles river and a conquering boat

Fathoms the sand in a tumble of mystery fumes

Waiting

The Nile knows the limpopo lingers

The kilimanjaro preserves the lore in icy memory. (p. 37)

The Niger, Limpopo and Nile remain important African rivers along which the various African regions for which European nations scrambled were demarcated. Bussa is a region of rocky rapids on the Niger, while kilimanjaro is the highest mountain in Africa. Bussa is ever memorable in the history of European exploration of Africa. In late 1805 the conquering boat of Mongo Park, one of the earliest explorers

of the Niger basin struck the “conquering rock” at Bussa rapids where he and his colleagues got drowned.

The hazards of European exploration are expressed in the tragedy of the “Conquering boats” hitting “the sand in a tumble of mystery fumes”. It is also seen in the fact that the “Nile knows the limpopo lingers”, but the conquering boat of Mongo Park hardly knew about the existence of the bussa rapids. The Kilimanjaro which by virtue of its height, oversees the continent and haven’t witnessed the Bussa tragedy records it in its “icy memory”.

In canto IV of *Waiting Laughters*,² the poet, through the perspective of the proverbial hunchback, takes a cursory backward glance at the terrain of past African history. Along the lanes of history are songs of African slaves in European chains of bondage, the impoverishment of the African continent, the conquistador's scramble for African continent, and pockets of African resistance of imperialism:

*And the hunchback flings a look
At the reeling vista of recurring History;
The sanguinary passion of slavery sagas,
The rusty anthem of the chain
And dawn's own children breaking bread
With rats in streets without names
Without light.
And the conquistador's severe coming,
His hoof of iron
And the dialect of the sun
The staccato syntax of treacherous treaties*

*And the fires of Dodowah
And the race to Fashoda
And the sea red every drop with vessels
Of raptured hearts
And Africa quartered like a giant mango
On the haggling stretch of Berlin tables (90).*

In the excerpt above, although the events recaptured along the vistas of recurrent African history span over four hundred years, the poet though seeking for fiction in history, avoids details of historical narration which is the realm of the historian. He achieves poetic laconic precision and conciseness through allusion to historical place names, like Dodowah, Fashoda, and Berlin. The full meaning of the poem must then rely on knowledge of historical incidents enacted in these historic place names. These place names express imperialism experience and the struggle by African communities to outlive this experience through socio-political alternatives.

Berlin, for instance, is significant for the Berlin West African Conference, which was pivoted in the developing momentum of the scramble for Africa. Representatives of fourteen countries met in Berlin in November 1884 at the invitation of Germany and France. It was preceded and precipitated by the growing tension of and rivalries in West Africa mainly over the control of the Congo Basin, but also over territories elsewhere particularly along the River Niger.

Stanley had conducted an expedition on the Congo for king Leopold of Belgium in order to establish Belgian influence

there and he met the French man De Brazza who was engaged in a similar exploit on behalf of the French. This was accompanied by the ritual signing of treaties with local Chiefs-notably the famous treaty of Mokoko, which was ratified by the French parliament in a blaze of imperialist publicity.

The British and Portuguese meanwhile signed a treaty in February, 1884 giving Portugal control of both mouths of the Congo. The fear that such rivalry might degenerate into war prompted the conference of the contending forces of Britain, France, Germany, Italy and Belgium.

The “fire of Dodowah, on its part, alludes to the battle of Dodowah which emanated from British challenge and subjugation of the sovereignty of Asante over all the coastal peoples of Gold Coast now Ghana. After the Asantehene’s court refusal to sign the draft treaties, disaster befell the first British drive on Kumasi during which Sir Charles MarCarthy fell to Asante forces at Nsamanku (1824). Spurred on by their exploit, the Asante resumed their drive towards the coast but were crushed at Dodowah on 7th of August, 1926 by a broad coalition of coastal peoples under the aegis of the British forces commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Perdon. The composition of the coalition forces comprised men of the Royal African corps-60, the militia of British Accra – 500, Native kings and chiefs with followers – 1082, making a total of 11,380 as against 11,00 of the natives.

The “race to Fashoda”, on the other hand, is an allusion to the Fashoda crisis in which two great European colonial powers

met apparently on the brink of war over a barren and remote region of Sudan. Armed conflict between the colonizing powers in most African regions (with the exception of Abyssinia and Liberia) had been avoided until 1898 when Britain and France found themselves on the brink of conflict over the remote and unconquered Southern Sudan.

The Fashada crisis was therefore an Anglo- French rivalry in West Africa where constant boundary disputes arose as each extended her forces into the interior. It refers in particular to the event in which French and British expeditions led by Captain Marchand and Sir Herbert Kitchener respectively converged on the small town of Fashoda in the Southern Sudan. The British hoisted the Union Jack flag 500 yards from the French position.

With these three allusions, Osundare, in order to give his poetic vision on the scramble for the partitioning of Africa, presents perfect pictures of it in the Fashoda crisis, the battle of Dodowah, and the Congo basin conflict, by which he presupposes the scramble was so. What draws finally home, the picture of the partitioning of Africa is the image of Africa “quartered like a giant mango on the haggling stretch of the Berlin tables” in the last line of the excerpt above.

If any of Osundare’s poems so artfully presents Western imperialism as bringing more curse than blessing to Africa it is “On seeing a Benin Mask in A British Museum”. The history of Benin Mask in British Museum dates back to the British Punitive Expedition of 1897. It was occasioned when the British party led by Philip, the acting consul general for

the Benin River District and some of the two hundred escorts and carriers were ambushed and killed by Benin warriors. This was for defying the warning to postpone their visit to the kingdom when the Oba was celebrating Ague Festival.

In the British reprisal attack, Benin Kingdom was sacked, razed down, and her famous Bronze plaque and other ornaments were looted to Britain. Osundare finds FESTAC “77 an apt opportunity to bemoan not just the loss of our valuable artifacts, but also cultural aberration, by creating a perfect picture of the woes of Western imperialism in the experience of the profanation of the Benin mask:

*Here stilted on plastic
A god deshrined
Uprooted from your past
Distanced from your present
Profaned Sojourner in a strange land
Rescued from a smoldering shrine
By a victorianizing expedition
Traded in for an OBE
Across the shores*

*Here you stand, chilly,
Away from your clothes
Gazed at by various tourists savouring
Paralleled lines on your forehead
Parabola on your cheek
Semicircles of your eye brows
And the solid geometry of your lips
Here you stand*

Dissected by alien eyes
(*Songs of the Market Place*, 39).

The apostrophe, “Here stilted on plastic - (line 1, stanza 1) and “Here you stand” repeated two times (stanza 2, lines 1 & 8), besides intensifying the bemoaning tone, also gives immediacy to a historical past. “Rescued from smoldering shrine” is sarcastic of the imperialists’ view that imperialism was a civilizing mission. The poet thus exhorts the mask to “Retain the tight dignity of those lips” which to him is a sign of stoicism in the face of imperialist humiliation.

Another aspect of contemporary African history that Osundare’s poetry is pre-occupied with is the anti-imperialist struggles for independence. This has received the poet’s attention in “Soweto”, “Namibia Talks” and “Zimbabwe”, all in *Songs of the Market Place*. “Soweto” re-enacts the twin historic massacres of black Africans by South African police, first, in Sharpsville and later in Soweto. The Sharpsville massacre of 21 March, 1960 was occasioned by the refusal of black south Africans to walk the streets of their God-given land wearing registration cards otherwise known as pass as if they were dogs. The Patriotic African congress (PAC) staged a demonstration against the pass law regulation under the leadership of Sobwoke. The unarmed crowd gathered outside a police station in Sharpsville. White South African policemen consequently shot dead in three minutes sixty-nine Africans. Two hundred other Africans, men, women and children who were running away were also shot in their backs and seriously wounded.

The Soweto massacre of June, 1976, on the other hand, resulted from an uprising led by school children over the imposition of Afrikaans as a compulsory language in black schools. The South African police indiscriminately opened fire on the pupils killing 170 of them and wounding many others after many days of clashes. The uprising spread to other parts and assumed the dimension of generalised protest against apartheid system.

The poem is not so much a condemnation of white police brutality as a celebration of the new found courage of black South African youths whose revolutionary stricture is a complete break-away from erstwhile servile attitude of past generations of black South Africans:

*Youth fire burns out
The accumulated lethargy of many years*

*Today is asking questions
That burnt yesterday
In the mouth
A kaffired will
Other-cheek turning
Till a jaw of anguish
Agitated a tongue of revolt*

*It must end, this slave life must end
Heloted squattered squalored kraaled
Booted butted robbed hanged carcassed*

*Plundered of sweat
Fleeced for the robement
Of colder climes
By monster merchants
Of the skin (47).*

The seething anger of South African Youths which eventually burnt out the accumulated lethargy of four hundred years is expressed in the verbs of dehumanization and exploitation of the last two stanzas above - "heloted" "squattered" "squalored", "kraaled", "booted" "butted", "robbed", "hanged", "carcassed", "plundered", "fleeced". The absence of punctuation marks in-between the catalogued verbs of dehumanization is expressive not only of the suffused anger, but also the urgency for change and the way forward which is proffered in "Namibia Talks".

"Namibia Talks" condemns first, the double standards of western member countries of the United Nations towards the Black man's predicaments in Southern Africa. The global syndrome of talks, conferences, debates, dialogues on pressing human problems that required urgent and decisive actions; as well as indictment of Africans' reliance for eventual liberation on the kinsfolk of perpetrators of apartheid:

*Now seek we freedom
In the hands of habitual slavers
How dare we seek life
From those who profit
By death*

The solution for apartheid proffered by the poet is African armament and liberation struggle:

*Black-smiths, assemble
Assemble
From the limpopo to the volta
Forge anew the armoury
Of will and action*

*Time to stop shooting words
At those who dialogue*

With rockets and mortars

The poet's envisioned African armament and arms struggle pays off in "Zimbabwe" which is dedicated to Jusiah Tongogora and every guerrilla who fought the war that turned Rhodesia into Zimbabwe. The poem mocks the enemies of freedom much as it celebrates the eventual independence of Zimbabwe,

*After ship wrecked talks
And jungles of blood
After countless treacheries
By man collared out of our fold
By the folly of ghostly powers (52).*

Apart from the refrain - "The cock has crowed" which recurs six times in alternate stanzas securing musicality, in no other section of the poem is the anthem of celebration most hilariously captured as in the fourth stanza:

*Not in vain
Have guns boomed
Not in vain
Are children orphans
Not in vain
Are wives widows
Before they are
Five and twenty (53).*

The struggle for supremacy amongst imperialist super power nations, which eventuated in World War II, attracts the poet's attention in "Hiroshima". The poem is a lamentation over the genocide at Hiroshima, which lies at a delta at the Hiroshima Bay in Japan. It was the first to be destroyed by an atomic bomb during the World War II. By the beginning of the war, Hiroshima was the seventh largest city in Japan, with a population of 350,000. During the war it was a regional army headquarters as well as a major rail centre and producer of war materials.

In an effort to hasten the end of the war, the U.S. government decided to use the recently developed atomic bomb against Japan. The first bomb was exploded over a point near the centre of Hiroshima at 8.15 AM on August 6, 1945, destroying almost everything within a radius of 6,000 to 8,000 feet (1830-2450 metres). Over 71,000 people were killed. Many more died of injuries and the effects of radiation. It is this massacre that the poet laments over in stanzas 4 and 5:

*Earth and sky in
Clouds of dismemberment
Cascades of roasting humans*

*Those who perish
May count for those
In love with numbers
But they may never enter the books
Whom savage fire consumes
By installment (55).*

The poet's disappointment is that "when bloodmen send fire atoms", it is "a legion unaware of the power-wrestle "that become guinea-pigs in a tinderbox". He laments that the toll of the massacre was so great that the actual dead could not be recorded by the living. Only those who "savage fire consumed by installment" are the Hibakusha survivors when even after five decades still died later of leukemia, pernicious anemia, and other diseases induced by radiation. He attributed the ashes in Hiroshima to the unreasonableness and power-wrestle" for supremacy amongst imperialist nations, whose victor is never the conventional fittest but the brutest".

Military and Democratic Governance

One of the saddest historical experiences which Osundare can hardly gloss over is the incessant military interventions in the Nigerian democratic process. This has attracted attention in "Feigning Rebels" in *Village Voices* as well as in "Shout of the people" and "song of the sudden storm" both in *Songs of the season*. "Feigning Rebels" condemns in its entirety the

frequent return of the military to the Nigerian political terrain:

*Our memory is a track of
throwers of dumb bombs
Promise peddlers
And prostrating apostates
Tiptoeing back to murmur
'good evening'
where once they shouted
'good night'*

The disillusionment of the Nigerian people at the failure of successive military regimes to live up to expectation of their avowed messianic mission is aptly expressed in the images of the "timber is scorched/ by the sun of cant at noon our hopes dash down/like melons in a harmattan twig". Similar disenchantment is conveyed in "shout of the people" written in memory of Nigerian 5th coup d'état:

*We have heard so many down crows
And brave pledges from cocky throats
But their rooster has never laid an egg
And our broods wait, bereft
Of a hatchery of hopes (34).*

Like in "Feigning Rebels" the people's dashed hopes in the military's avowed messianic mission is expressed in the metaphor of "their rooster has never laid an egg".

The poet's repugnance at the progressive metamorphosis of successive military leaders from their avowed people's messiahs into tyrants, is severally expressed in the images of 'earthworm/twirl into seething serpents', 'the dove/swoop down like a practiced hawk' "matronly moon/suddenly turn a matriarch of mayhem" in "*Shout the people*". It is such contradictions in the attitude of successive military regimes that the poet poses some rhetorical questions in "Feigning Rebel":

*Tell us
Are you real revolutionaries?
Or feigning kings
Waiting for crown? (20).*

Of even greater contradiction is the fact that though each military regime sees itself as corrective, successive regimes accuse the preceding ones of failing to salvage the nation. For instance, the 4th coup by Major-General Buhari on 31st December 1983 was staged at the brink of the collapse of the Nigerian economy. Buhari, who consequently attempted to instill moral and financial discipline in Nigerians was later accused by General Ibrahim Babangida, who dethroned him in the 5th coup of August 27th, 1985, of being "too rigid and uncompromising in his attitude to the use of national significance".

Babangida's own regime in contrast tended to encourage corruption and profligacy, which Buhari was striving to curtail in our national fabric. The regime's earliest action that tended to confirm this impression was the surprise release of

all corrupt second Republic politicians who Buhari had put in detention. It is this sudden freedom granted to the looters of the nation's treasury without due reprisal that Osundare laments in "Songs of the sudden storm":

*A sudden storm which threw open
The doors of anguish
And, alas, out trooped animals
Of unspeakable colours
Their claws still cunning as ever
Their fangs ever so fatal*

*Ah the hyenas are back again
To thundering bugles of our crippled memory. (104).*

The reality of the ambivalent attitude of the Nigerian populace also attracts Osundare's comment in the poem. Part of what endeared the early Buhari regime to the Nigerian public, was the courage to detain corrupt politicians of the Shagari civilian government. The poet marvels that this same Nigerian public now turns round to hail their release:

*The people hailed the triumphant freedom
Of the gazelle whose beauty is sun
To our brooding streets,
The dazzling antelope whose lithesome legs
Play carrier to speedy hopes
Even the parrot whose stubborn beak
Is question mark for a thousand answers....
People of our land
Our memory is a lazy dust*

*Washed easily off our head
By showers of arbitrary seasons. (104-5).*

In “Udoji”, Osundare revisits the 1975 Udoji Salary review, a policy during the military regime of General Yakubu Gowon, which consequence on the nation’s economy successive governments were yet able to reverse. The after-war oil boom seventies was followed by spates of protests and civil unrest resulting from the poor quality of life of the Nigerian people in the midst of economic splendour. In response, government set up a salary Review Panel headed by Chief Jerome Udoji that recommended new salaries and arrears for civil servants and some in the private sector. Udoji’s name became synonymous with the bonanza.

From the poet's vision, what the populace needed was the provision of social services for the improvement of their quality of life, rather than inflationary salary and arrears. The effectiveness of the poem derives from the voice of the first person plural “we” which aptly expresses the people’s plight:

*We ask for food and water
To keep our toiling frames
On the hoe
But they inundate us with Udoji*

*Now pockets burst with arrears
But market stalls are empty
Gari is dearer than eyes
A naira cannot buy a yam*

*When a bribe is too heavy
It impoverishes the giver
Tell the givers of this bribe
That what we need
Is more than money can buy
(Songs of the Market Place, 35-6).*

The government's historic act of inundating workers with inflationary salaries in order not to be accused of insensitivity to their yearning is analogous to the stepmother-stepson and the braggart-forty lame mythic anecdotes. Just as the stepmother afraid of being labeled wicked, overfeeds her stepson till he constipates, so the braggart, afraid of being accused of shrunken arms, kills forty lame to prove his valiance; so also the government afraid of the stigma of insensitivity inundates civil servants with inflationary salaries.

Since its genesis during the Generals Mohammadu Buhari and Tunde Idiagbon military regime between 1984 and 1985 with the introduction of War Against Indiscipline (WAI) up to date, illegal and indiscriminate demolition of houses, kiosks, stores etc. has been a recurrent feature by successive governments all over the country. Colonel Raji Rasaki, a one time military governor of Lagos State ordered the demolition of Maroko. Aya in Lagos State was equally demolished on the orders of Governor Oyinola. In Plateau State, Kiosks, bukas and shacks were demolished on account of the governor passing by to commission a completed housing project. So also in the Federal Capital Territory thousands of houses, churches, kiosks etc were demolished within the city

and in some satellite towns of the Territory during Alh. Bunu's tenure as minister of the Territory.

In the face of economic recession, mass unemployment and retrenchment, Osundare in "and cometh the bulldozer" questions the rationale behind illegal and indiscriminate demolition of structures from which the masses of the people derive their living, pay taxes to government, and tithes to God. The untold hardship unleashed on victims of demolition is expressed in stanza 3-4 of the poem:

*Elephant heels on our fate and future
A jobless husband and a dozen kids
Eked a living from my kobo kiosk
Now reduced to rust and dust*

*The source of tithes and tax and tolls
And countless doles we die to pay
Is now in ruins under the iron heels
With triumph songs in its gleeful mouth
(Songs of the Seasons, 17-18).*

Although Osundare is not averse to keeping environment clean, he considers irrational doing so at the risk of rendering thousands homeless and unfed:

*War on filth or filth on wars
Clean the streets and paint the walls
A rubbed stall and glittering eaves
Are just enough for a howling stomach (17).*

In no other poem is the effect of indiscriminate demolition of kiosks on the victims and their dependants more painfully expressed as in "Song for children's day". Daddy and Mummy's response to their son's request for school uniform and shoes in which to attend, like other pupils, the children's day celebration conveys the message:

*Daddy merely shook his head
But a manly tear betrayed his empty purse:
He hasn't gone to work for several months
Since a retrenchment letter
Scribbled away his job
And a ravaging hunger took permanent shelter
In our crowded shack....*

*Mummy merely showed me her fraying
wrapper
And the bleeding rubble
Of her once enduring kiosk
Recently laid low by the WAI brigade
(Songs of the season, 129-131).*

The menace of straying bullets in contemporary Nigerian history draws Osundare's attention in "Songs of straying Bullets". This results either from lawless activities of armed robbers, or of hooligans during religious or civil crisis, or from shoot-outs by law enforcement agents at protesting student groups. The most sympathetic case in recent history is that of a two-year-old child, Mojisola Kayode Adeleye who a straying bullet fired by armed bandits who operated in their Ayoola Lawal Street in Shomolo area of Lagos State got

lodged in her head through her left eye on 16 March, 2001. It took the sympathetic magnanimity of Civilian governor Tinubu to give the sum of N250,000 for surgical operation to save the life of the child. Stanza 2 and 3 of the poem recapture the general experience of straying bullets in Nigeria:

*An innocent sleep in your own bedroom
Far from a bang, far from a boom
Far from buttons, bronze or steel
Far from order of kit and keel*

*But through your window, through your roof
The wandering bolt often comes with a proof
Ripping your belly, uncapping your head
Soaking your house in a messy red.
(Songs of the Season, 30-31).*

Beyond this expression of general experience, the poem laments in particular deaths from incidents of straying bullets by law enforcement agents. It condemns government's immunity on culprits of death by erring triggers and views as the mark of insensitivity and lack of value for human life, government's ready paltry monetary recompense as reparation for lost lives while culprits go unscathed:

*A sigh or two in the government press
The king regrets with a royal stress
A naira or two for your murdered kin.
The king is kind beyond our ken*

*The law is the law and that is right
It wields its sword without fear of fright
To kill or maim in a peaceful drill
Is not beyond a casual thrill. (30-31).*

A typical example of killing with impunity by law enforcement agents, which according to the poet, was for mere “casual thrill” was that of a Nigerian athlete, Ndubisi Dele Ndor. While sojourning in Nigeria from abroad Ndor was murdered in 1984 at a check point in Lagos by a Nigerian Policeman.

The callous attitude of public figures towards police shoot-out on unarmed Nigerian citizens is recaptured in “Only four”. This is based on the June 8, 1986 students' protest at Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria against the high-handedness of their Vice-Chancellor, Professor Ango Abdulahi. The VC's invitation of the police to quell the crisis led to the death of some students while many were injured. Eager to refute the press report that many students lost their lives, the VC explained that only FOUR died. To the aggrieved Nigerian public, whose feelings the poet presents, the phrase ONLY FOUR was a callous expression of the low value for human life, a slap on the sad emotion of the aggrieved parents:

*The students assailed my comfort
For just a few hours
And I called the police to quell the row
My guests fired their guns
(After all, the mob too fired*

*Their volleys of noisy chants)
And a few students decided to die*

*The press then screamed
As if it was a senseless massacre
But when I counted the corpses
They numbered a meagre FOUR*

*FOUR, yes, only four!
From a crowd of a dozen thousand
How can FOUR dead be such a crime?
(Songs of the Season, 54).*

The sarcasm in the above stanzas derives from the use of the first person singular pronoun I – persona that conveys the V.C's indifference towards the dead students.

In “a song for Anini”, Osundare reflects on one of the most scandalous Police complicity in armed robbery incidents in Nigeria. Anini as described by the poet was a near legendary armed robber caught and executed after one of the longest and most intensive manhunts in Nigerian history. It took the combined efforts of the army and the police to arrest Anini and his cohorts. The legendary attributes of Anini derived partly from the co-operation of police Superintendent Iyamu who offered unofficial police protection through the supply of the gang with arms and ammunition, and partly from his purported possession of supernatural attributes of invincibility, omnipresence, and prescience of imminent danger.

The arrest of Monday Osunbor who was *de facto* operations chief for Anini limited Anini's ability to operate, and even his half-hearted attempt to rescue Osunbor from Benin Military Hospital never went beyond the exploratory stage. Ofega, another accomplice lacked even the basic ability to converse in pidgin. He was a tout at Benin Motor Park when Anini gave him a gun to act as his bodyguard and ever since he claimed, "I dey front dey follow" (sic). Anini's gang was finally cracked by the police operation led by Commissioner Parry Osanyande.

Not particularly interested in historical details, Osundare explores to great poetic effect, the sudden ironic twist in the exploits of a demi-god gang-star whose arrest and execution now present him in his human form. The two-part poem thus presents in the first half, Anini's legendary and demi-god attributes:

*They prime their dogs
They shoot their guns
You garner the bullets
In your flaming hands
Then melt at once
Into slender air
And when in danger
In your distant roosts
Your twitching thumb
Is your early cue.*

(Songs of the season, 140).

In the second half of the poem Osundare deflates the superman gangster:

*And here now you are in flesh – and blood
Caught and cut like a roaming ram
Tabloid's treasure, prize for the guru
Song and jig in our dusty streets
Clang of medals, trumpet of kings... (141).*

Touched perhaps by the general experience of the terrorism by armed bandits, the Anini manhunt was one of the rare incidents that united the Nigerian people regardless of regional lines. Anini's arrest was therefore a feat for national celebration. Thus "united in blood", the poet mockingly calls for a holiday and equitable sharing of Anini's executed flesh, "portions for the north/a portion for the South" to mark this END to our nation's crime".

One of the cruelest historical experiences in Nigeria's military and civilian governance is the spate of politically motivated murders. There was the murder, during General Sani Abacha's regime, of Madam Kudirat Abiola, wife of Late Chief M.K.O. Abiola and winner of the June 12 annulled presidential elections. The most brutish and sophisticated of this experience during General Babangida's regime is reflected in "for Dele Giwa "the veteran journalist who was ruthlessly murdered in 1986 when a letter bomb delivered to him exploded and claimed his life. The owner of the *Newswatch Magazine*, Giwa was greatly admired for his incisive criticism of social anomalies and forthrightness. His popular "editorial Suite" and column, "when parallax breaks"

were renowned for what the poet, describes as “baskets of ripening truth” for which he was murdered. The complicity of the Babangida’s Regime in his murder is suggested in the mournful first stanza:

*Let my country be
My cause
Not
My curse
Let my country be
My beauty
Let my land be
My grace
Not my grave
(Songs of the Season, 73).*

And later in the lines following:

*Oh Truth! -----
The tyrant kicks you in his dust of lies....
Oh truth
Bent, not broken ----- (74)*

Osundare’s further poetic device for avoiding historical details is allusion to historical personages, which conjures up the historical events or incidents surrounding particular historical personages in lines, stanzas, or poems in which they occur. He explores this while reflecting on varying circumstances of patriotic or unpatriotic expectations by treasury looters, parasites, deceitful politicians, traitors and

wealth acquirers. These are represented in the images of “potholes” “smart general” idle bugs, prattling tongues, “Blaise” and “Imelda” in canto II of *Waiting Laughter*:

Waiting

Like the potholes for its po(r)tion of blood

*Like the smart General for his umpteenth
million*

Like idle bugs for their nightly feast

Like the prattling tongues of parliament of ruse

Like Blaise for a trusting Thomas

Like Imelda for her shoe (52).

Among the human actors in the various parasitic or exploitative circumstances of waiting are historical personages like the unnamed smart general for his umpteenth million; Blaise for a trusting Thomas” and “Imelda for her shoes”. The meaning of the poem is to be gleaned from the knowledge of the history surrounding these personages.

“Thomas”, for instance, alludes to the famous Thomas Sankara, the 29-year-old head of state of Burkina Faso. Thomas Sankara, a socialist par excellence, held the cause of the masses of his subjects very dear to his heart. “Blaise, on the other hand, alludes to Blaise Campore also of Burkina Faso, a friend of and second in command to Thomas Sankara who he, Blaise assassinated in 1987.

“Imelda” alludes to Imelda Marcos, wife of late President Ferdinand Marcos of the Philippines both of whom fled into exile in 1986 after their regime was deposed. As first lady of

the Philippines, Imelda's pet project was acquisition of shoes. She was reputed for having acquired over 250 pairs of shoes.

Thus in Thomas Sankara, the poet flaunts a perfect paradigm for selfless and purposeful leadership; in Blaise Campore, a picture of an arch-traitor; while in Imelda, the epitome of the vanity of inordinate acquisitiveness. This message is drawn home by the humour of Imelda waiting in vain at Hawaii for shoes she had abandoned in the Philippines while scuttling into exile with her deposed husband.

In "Rithmetic of Ruse," the poet reflects on the 1979 elections for the return to the Second Republic democracy after over thirteen years of military rule. The poem is specifically on the presidential election result controversy, which arose on the basis of the election figures below:

Party	Presidential Candidates	No. of Votes
NPN	Alhaji Shehu Shagari	5688,857
UPN	Chief Obafemi Awolowo	4,916,651
NPP	Dr Nnamdi Azikiwe	2,822,523
PRP	Alhaji Aminu Kano	1,732,113
GNPP	Alhaji Waziri Ibrahim	1,686,489

Based on the above figures, Alhaji Shehu Shagari was declared winner, having satisfied two sub-sections of section 34A of Electoral Degree No 73 of 1977 namely:

- (i) Sub-section (I) (C) (i) – that he had the highest number of votes cast at the election.

- (ii) Sub-section (I) (C) (ii) – that he had not less than one-quarter of the votes at the election in each of at least two third of all the 19 states in the federation.

The controversy centred on the meaning of one quarter of the votes cast in each of at least two-thirds of all the 19 states of the federation.

It was generally accepted that to be declared winner a candidate, apart from having the highest number of votes, must also have at least 25 percent of the votes cast in at least 13 of the 19 states. But on the night of Monday 13 August, Richard Akinjide, the national legal Adviser of the NPN, argued that the proper meaning of two-thirds of 19 states does not mean 13 but 12. Less than 24 hours later the official announcement of the winner was made by FEDECO, very much the same as NPN interpretation.

Oyeleye Oyediran (1981:144) observes that most of the mathematicians who contributed to the debate were against FEDECO interpretation. Professor Chike Obi on the Network news and the National Newspapers, Statistician Adamu on Ibadan television and local radio stations, and ubiquitous engineer, Professor Awolabi, on all the mass media, thought the crisis was simply mathematical rather than political.

On Monday 20 August Awolowo, who was declared the runner-up at the presidential election filed a petition against the declaration of Shagari as president elect at the special tribunal instituted to hear petitions on the presidential election, seeking amongst other things:

- (a) to determine that Shagari was not duly elected or returned and that his election or return was void,
- (b) to order kurfi and Menkiti to arrange for an election to be held in accordance with the provision of section 3 A of the election (Amendment) degree 1977 i.e. order an election by the electoral college to be contested by Shagari and himself.

One week after Awolowo's petition was filed Shagari stated that he was duly returned by a majority of lawful votes. Secondly, that the result of the presidential election held on 11 August 1979 was declared on 16 August 1979. The Electoral College, which the petition now wants held must have been arranged and held within seven days from August 16 1979. Kurfi and Menkiti as chief electoral officer and returning officer respectively had ceased to have any lawful authority to arrange for or hold any Electoral College for the same presidential election.

On the third day of the proceedings, the tribunal made up of justices B.O. Kazeem (Chairman), A.I. Aseme and A.B. Wali gave its unanimous decision on Monday 10th September 1979. It stated that what was in dispute was not that Shagari had the highest votes cast at the election, rather that he had less than one quarter of the votes cast at the election in each of at least two thirds of all the 19 States in the Federation. The tribunal also agreed that two thirds of 19 States was 12 and argued that the law makers of that section intended nothing more than that, and that if the legislators intended anything to the contrary, they would have provided a "proviso" to take care of any possible contingencies.

Awolowo appealed to the Supreme Court and, in its decision made public on Wednesday 26 September 1979, the highest court in the Federation was divided. The Chief Justice of Nigeria, Fatai-Williams, read the majority opinion, which dismissed Awolowo's appeal. Others on the minority side were Supreme Court Justices Ayo Irikefe, Mohammed Bello, Chukwunweike Idighie and Muhammadu Uwais.

From the content of "Rithmetic of Ruse" there is no doubt about Osundare's side on the issue of $\frac{2}{3}$ of 19 states. Stanza 3 of the poem shows the poet's opinion to be 13 since from poetic viewpoint a state which is a whole or an entity is not expected to be fractioned:

*They have fractioned
A fragmented whole
And the splinters will smother
Them in their thousands*

The poem also expresses the poet's suspicion of electoral fraud in the NPN's victory in the presidential election. The line "Cow enfranchised by them" is an accusation allied to that which bedevilled the 1963 census figures which J.P. Clark in "Seasons of Omen" views as one of the omens for the collapse of the first Republic. According to Clark, "when clans were discovered that were not in the book/ and cattle counted for heads of men/ Then came the five hunters".

Similarly, in "Rithmetic of Ruse" the poet declares:

*Men born with long crowns
Have miscounted those
They claim to rule
The cows enfranchised by them
Will freely impale them
On their wavering horns
Leaving us with our search
For the fragments of truth.*

(Song of the Market Place, 19).

The poet's basis for the argument that $\frac{2}{3}$ of 19 states is 13 is in accord with the argument of the two dissenting justices of the Supreme Court of Appeal. To the trio, the phrase "not less than one quarter of the votes cast at the election in each of at least two-thirds of all the states in the federation" must mean "not less than one quarter of the votes cast at the election in each of at least thirteen states in the Federation". Similarly the phrase "two-thirds state" should be made synonymous with two-thirds of the territorial or physical area of the state. If the words were construed otherwise, such as two-thirds of the total votes cast, we would be substituting quantum of votes for geographical spread, which was not the intention of the legislators.

The poet's lack of conviction in the judgement of the tribunal and appeal court is expressed in the tone of imprecation, which the poet pronounces, on the defrauders of the electorate. That is, "Splinters of a fragmented whole will smother them in their thousand" and "the cows enfranchised by them/will freely impale them/on their wavering horns". The substitution of quantum of votes for geographical spread

which the poet feels was not what the legislators intended as well as his suspicion of falsification of election figures are bitterly expressed in the first two stanzas:

*We murder truth
And burn sophisticated candles
In search of illusions
A calculated cloud is let down
By satanic computers coughing
Catechisms in algebraic quantum.*

*Theirs is the 'rhythmic of deceit
Power hunters wallowing through whites
To a minus throne
Cooking numbers for a gullible mass (19).*

The Scourge of Tyrants

If any subject in contemporary world history has been so nightmarish to Osundare it is the "Scourge of tyrants and their wormy sins". From poem to poem, Osundare expressed repugnance towards world tyrants. In "Song of the tyrants" whose epigram is adapted from Wole Soyinka's *Kongi's Harvest*,² the poet unleashes curses and imprecations upon all tyrants. Although tyrants are identified with brutishness, conservatism, retrogressiveness, autocracy and pride, they are however typified in the poem by Hitler of Germany and Czar of Russia:

*But our world is a book of yesterday – scenes
scourge of tyrants and their wormy sins*

*[Hitler] hit the pall in a rayless tomb
Zia came to earth in a nameless bomb
(Songs of the Seasons, 29).*

Osundare frowns at tyrants' use of torture, incarceration, proscription etc, as means of intimidating their subjects into silence and submission. Most ruinous of tyrants' flaws, the poet believes, is over-weening pride as suggested in the poem's postscript: "Who the gods would destroy/they first make mad!" This is illustrated in the shameless fall of the two tyrants. The last Czar, Nicholas II of Russia, was overthrown in the Russian Revolution of March, 1917 and executed by the public in 1918; while Hitler, pressed by the allied forces acknowledged defeat and later committed suicide in 1944.

In Canto III of *Waiting Laughter*, the poet makes further allusions to historical personages to express the universal truth about the inevitable doom of tyrants. He gives perfect pictures of some rulers by whom it is presupposed that an inevitable fall awaits all tyrants. He thus couples this general notion with particular examples from Germany, the Philippines and Africa:

*Waiting
Like Hitler in his bunker
Like Marcus in Hawaii
Like Idi Amin in a sandy purgatory*

Through the three tyrants, Hitler, Marcus and Idi Amin, Osundare, expresses his vision about the cyclic nature of history in which parallel historical events recur constantly.

World history books are replete with cases of tyrants, the most brutal of whom has been Adolf Hitler of Germany. The scourge of tyrants and their wormy sins could be gleaned by some insight into the reigns of the tyrants alluded to in the excerpt above. Starting from Africa's most vicious tyrant, Idi Amin Dada was the ruler of Uganda from 1971 to 1979. As army officer, he came to power after leading the army in overthrowing Uganda's civilian president Milton Obote in a coup of 24/25th January, 1971. Like Napoleon Bonaparte, who aspired to conquer Europe, Amin entertained grandiose vision of Uganda becoming the strongest military power in the region. In 1972 he forced an estimated 40,000 to 50,000 Asians living in Uganda to leave the country. His regime was known for its ruthless determination to eliminate real and potential enemies. Murders and disappearances were the most feared forms of personal violence under Amin. His own Chief Justice was kidnapped and killed. The June 1975 Justice Saied's commission of inquiry showed that of 308 disappearances investigated, 109 occurred in 1971, 134 in 1972, 55 in 1973 and 10 in 1974. The victims consisted of 52 civilians, 93 soldiers and officers, 49 police staff and 13 prison staff.

Amin's regime appeared to relish illegal and covert actions much like the Nazi regime only lacking the brutal efficiency of the Hitler regime, which Amin claimed to admire. He also called for extinction of Israel, praised Adolf Hitler for murdering of the Jews and denounced the leaders of many nations. The Soviet Union forcefully disallowed him from erecting a statue to honour Hitler. His rule ended when Ugandans who opposed him and troops from neighbouring

Tanzania overthrew his government. Amin then fled the country.

Ferdinand E Marcus on his part ruled as president of the Philippines from 1965 to 1986. As president he restricted the freedom of the people, established martial law in 1972 and ruled chiefly by decree while restricting activities of political parties, labour unions, and other organizations that opposed the government.

In 1983, Benigno S. Aquino, Jr. Marcus' leading political rival was assassinated upon his return to the Philippines from self-exile in the United States.

The strong protest over the acquittal of Aquino's assassins, unrest due to political restrictions, and the declining economic conditions had to force Marcus to hold a presidential election in February, 1986. Corazon Aquino, the widow of Benigno Aquino, became Marcus's chief election opponent. The national assembly ruled that Marcus won the election amidst widespread accusation of Marcus's supporters of election fraud and that Marcus used his associates.

The display of popular oppositions through spates of protests and demonstrations left Marcus with no other choice but to leave the country. He and his family and some supporters were air lifted out of the Philippines by the US Airforce. Corazon Aquino was then sworn in as president.

In "Ignorance", the poet names the disease of the poem's title as tyrants' other tool of subjugation of the human race.

Besides over weaning pride, which has been the drive of tyrants, Osundare names ignorance as Hitler's other tool of subjugation.

*Hitler armed ignorance
To fight the world
Won the first battle
Against reason
And enthroned the superstition
Of Aryan superiority*

At last

*The pogrom
And a world ablaze
(Songs of the Market Place, 33-34)*

Adolf Hitler, the German dictator, wrote "mein kampf" expressing his philosophy of Aryan superiority over other races of the world. He established a concentration camp where he exterminated over 6 million Jews. His invasion of Poland in 1939 precipitated the world war. Osundare regards his decision to fight the world as born out of ignorance and his philosophy of Aryan superiority as superstitious, both of which led to the pogrom, extermination of the Jews and the setting the world ablaze, i.e., the World War II.

In "To the Dinosaur", while predicting similar doom's end for an anonymous military dictator, as with tyrants the world over, the poet however flaunts a typical world fallen tyrant

through allusions to the place names associated with the fallen hero:

*The owl perches on the Iroko
And hoots out a tune:
The whip that carved weal on the first wife
Will descend from the rafter someday.*

To give the new bride a stroke of history

*After Notre Dame
Came Waterloo
And then St. Helena*

*Then you will surely fade into prehistory
Remembered when tales are told of midday dreams
And specters on the market place.
(Songs of the Market Place, 42).*

Although the historical tyrant represented in the metaphor of the ‘first wife.’ and the Nigerian military dictator represented by the ‘new bride’, are anonymous, the identity of the historical tyrant is however gleaned through allusions to historical place names of Notre Dame, Waterloo and St. Helena . These historical place names refer to no other tyrant than Napoleon Bonaparte.

Historically, Notre Dame in Paris, France was the scene of the coronation of Napoleon I in 1804. Waterloo in the Austrian Netherlands is the scene where the opposing forces of the battle of Nations – Prussia, Austria, Russia and Sweden

– met and Napoleon’s army was decisively defeated by troops led by the British Duke of Wellington and the Prussian field Marshal Gebhard Jan Blucher. St. Helena, on the other hand, was a lonely island, a thousand miles from the coast of South Africa. This was where after Napoleon Bonaparte, emperor of the French and would be master of Europe, surrendered to the British at Waterloo, was sent to this rocky island where he spent the last six years of his life.

Although the catalogue of tyrants in Osundare’s poetry confirms the poet’s vision of history as cyclic, dramatizing the scourge of one tyrant and another, their wormy sins and eventual fall, no other tyrants’ fall has Osundare ever so celebrated as the one in “The Fall of the Beast”. This poem is dedicated to the Sandinista guerrilla group who rebelled against General Anastasia Debayle Somoya’s autocratic rule in 1976–9 in Nicaragua. The poem mockingly celebrates the shameful fall of the tyrant in the hands of the Sandinista rebels:

*The hyena falls
In the jungle
Its blustering whiskers
Matted with venom*

*Bazookaed is the heart
Of Odium and flint
Muted the mouth
That declared a million deaths
(Songs of the Market Place, 34-4)*

The poem celebrates the Nicaraguan revolution, which ended the dictatorial leadership of president Sandinisto. His regime was reputed to be corrupt and oppressive as much as that before him. The general himself succeeded his father, Somoza who ruled Nicaragua from 1937-56 when he was assassinated. The Somoza dynasties were repressive and appropriated large estates as landlords from landless peasants. Osundare mocks this appropriation and grab of national wealth by the fallen dynasty in the lines following:

*The beast slumps
Its grabbing fingers
Stiff like its statues
Unclawed the loot
Of Nicaragua's blood.*

The images of “hyena”, “beast” “Heart of Odium and flint Venom” express how tyrannous Sandinisto was. He frequently murdered, decreed a million death for opposing the Somoza tyrannical leadership. The poet views his acquisitiveness as sheer loot, which the Nicaraguan leader “unclawed” when he was toppled.

Conclusion

The relationship between contemporary historical reality and Niyi Osundare's poetry has so far been established. While history remains the reservoir of creative imagination, what Osundare looks for in history is not so much the truth as the fiction. He uses the narration as handmaiden for poetic imagination

Historical narration is transformed into poetry through diverse poetic devices. Through allusion to place names and geographical features Osundare avoids historical details and secures poetic laconic precision and conciseness. Meaning of the poem is gleaned mainly through knowledge of the historical incidents enacted in these historic place names.

Similarly, allusion to historical personages conjure up the particular historical events and incidents surrounding particular historical personages in the lines, stanzas or poems in which they occur. Through this device, the poet expresses the universal truth about the inevitable doom's end of tyrants, and gives perfect picture of some rulers by whom it is presupposed that an inevitable fall awaits all tyrants. In order to universalise this poetic truth, he couples the general notion with particular examples from Germany (Adolf Hitler), the Philippines (Ferdinand Marcos) and Africa (Idi Amin Dada).

With ordinary historical figures, like Anini, Osundare ignores the detailed events that brought him to the limelight of history, but rather explores the sudden ironic twist in the exploit of a demi-god gangster whose arrest and execution now present him in his human form. His poetry also reflects on Nigerians' ambivalent attitudes to historical situations; as well as on the patriotic and unpatriotic circumstances of public figures such as treasury looters, parasites, deceitful politicians, traitors, wealth acquirers, the scourge of tyrants and their wormy sins.

The poet's varying attitudes to historical incidents are expressed through humour, sarcasm, irony, metaphor,

paradox as well as through the first person singular/plural pronoun I/We – persona etc. Apostrophe is used not only to intensify the bemoaning mood of historical events but also to give immediacy to historical past. Vast historical incidents spanning over four hundred years are contracted into a single historical moment through proverbial narrators and mythic anecdotes by which analogy is graphically drawn between mythic/historical incidents and contemporary reality. This way, Osundare transforms historical reality into poetry.

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18. A New Dawn in South Africa: Athol Fugard's *Playland*

Chinyelu Ojukwu

Athol Fugard is a white South African from the Afrikaner stock who were the main architects of the unique and evil form of government known as "apartheid" which virtually destroyed the soul of that country during the apartheid regime. Fugard grew up in Port-Elizabeth among the lowly South Africans and very early in his life reacted against the injustice he saw around him.

He developed a very strong sense of patriotism which meant that he realized that if South Africa had continued in that chosen apartheid form, it was doomed to destruction. For him, therefore, the only saviour was a change that would entail the dismantling of the instruments of apartheid and the establishment of a humane society.

In the light of this, Fugard wrote many plays demonstrating the human condition in South Africa during this period. He wrote against the background of apartheid and the ripple effects it had on the black masses. Such plays as *Boesman and Lena*; *No- Good Friday*; *Sizwe Bansi Is Dead*; *The Island*; *Statements After an Arrest Under the Immorality Act* among many others vividly portray the hopelessness, frustrations and the struggles of the black masses to survive within the oppressive and tyrannical system that gave no meaning to their existence.

Much later, Fugard's *My Children! My Africa!* was written towards the end of apartheid regime. It is not surprising that the characters in the play have become more vocal and strident in their condemnation of that destructive system.

Although apartheid has long been repealed during the regime of the then South African President F.W. De Klerk, Fugard's plays generally still stand the test of time in the sense that the condition or situation of South African blacks today was brought about by decades of torture and deprivation.

Athol Fugard's *Playland*, written at the end of the apartheid regime in South Africa, thus, presents the ripple effects of the bizarre and inhuman apartheid laws which have taken their toll on both the white oppressors and the oppressed blacks in that country. The play takes place on the last day of 1989 (Dec. 31st 1989) as the characters await the New Year of 1990. The place is "A small traveling amusement park encamped on the outskirts of a Karoo town" in South Africa (p.5).

The play opens as Martinus Zoeloe, a night watchman in *Playland* angrily harangues about the humiliation, dehumanization and debasement of the black women, many of whom were raped by their white employers and forced to have unwanted babies. Martinus believes that a time will come when these wicked men will pay for their cruelty.

Martinus: *Ja! That day it is Martinus who has a good laugh. You tell lies and cheat and drink and make trouble with the little girls and you think*

God doesn't know? He knows! He sees everything you do and when the Big Day of Judging comes he will say to you, and you, and especially you: Hey! You fucked the little girls in Cradock and gave them babies; you fucked the little girls in Noupoort and gave them babies - what you got to say for yourself? And you got nothing to say because it's true and that's the end of it (6).

His fiancée is one of such women who were raped by their masters. Martinus retaliated by killing the white boss who defiled his woman. That explains his death sentence which was later reduced to life imprisonment when the full facts emerged.

Athol Fugard's belief in giving voice to the voiceless is echoed by Gideon Le Roux when he applauds Martinus for speaking his mind on the injustice going on around him.

Gideon: *... Don't let them get away with it. You got to speak up in this bloody world. It's the only way to put an end to all the nonsense that is going on. Everywhere you look - bloody nonsense! People think they can get away with anything these days... (6).*

The characters in this play are not laid back. They give voice to their deepest thoughts. They are also representative characters in the sense that Martinus Zoeloe represents the bulk of the poor black masses who have been humiliated and

throdden upon for several decades but have now refused to sit back and accept the gross injustice in their lives. They have decided to speak up and fight for their survival and emancipation even if it means sacrificing their lives, with the ardent belief that someday everybody will account for all he has done to his fellow man.

Gideon Le Roux, on the other hand, represents the white Lords of apartheid South Africa who have long dehumanized the blacks in that country and have come face to face with their cruelty in the sense that they now experience an inner torment which makes them want to apologise, ask for forgiveness of their gross iniquities on humanity and start life anew.

For the main part of the play, Martinus engages Gideon in the discussion bordering on the Christian belief in the judgement day when the “Big Book” would be opened and every soul will account for all his activities while on earth. Martinus reiterates that however hard people try to suppress or forget their heinous past activities, someday, they would be made to answer for them in God’s presence.

Martinus: *... You can try to forget as hard as you like but it won't help, because all the things you did are written down in the Big Book, and when the day comes you will stand there and He will read them to you. And then what you got to say? (13).*

Gideon, however, rejects the idea of the “Big Book” and the recording of all the “wrong doings” of humanity. According to him, “They’ll need more than shorthand up there if they want to keep up with what’s going on down here, that I can tell you.” (13-14)

This brings to mind Athol Fugard’s constant reference to the Christian doctrine of the judgement day in his works. Often times those who preach about this day are themselves part of the filth which they preach against. They carry logs in their eyes but are very anxious to point at the specks in some others’ eyes.

In *Sizwe Bansi Is Dead*, for instance, Fugard satirizes the hypocrisy of and the contradictions posed by Christianity and colonialism, when the white priest who preaches repentance and God’s love also collaborates with the forces of oppression (the government) in enforcing the inhuman laws of apartheid system, by ensuring that his congregation complies with the Pass Law, Resident Permit and others. Buntu, acting as the white priest on the pulpit, preaches thus:

Buntu: *The Lord wants to save you. Hand yourself over to him, while there is still time, while Jesus is still prepared to listen to you.... Be careful lest when the big day comes and the pages of the big book are turned, it is found that your name is missing. Repent before it is too late.* (40-41).

The same priest leaves the pulpit and goes round the congregation verifying that they all have their Native Identity

numbers and passbooks: "Name, please, Sir? Number? Thank you. Good afternoon sister - Your name please. Address? Number? God bless you." (41).

This is utter hypocrisy. Where is the love? Where is the oneness of humanity which the Christian doctrine endorses? Yet these are the natives of the same country, South Africa. One wonders why the white priest could not preach against the inhuman Apartheid Laws prohibiting the natural movement and freedom of man to freely choose where he wishes to live or be at any point in time in his own country. The priest, therefore, uses the bible to cower his black victims and make them submissive to the inhuman law.

In *Playland*, Fugard criticizes this same attitude as demonstrated by Dominee Badenhorst who believes he is a good Christian. He visits prisoners in their cells to talk to them about God and how bad it is to kill, without criticizing the whites who daily uphold the apartheid regime and kill defenceless blacks. Badenhorst has never given a thought to the inhuman apartheid machinery that has killed many blacks, maimed many and made more prisoners on their own land. Badenhorst never gave a thought to the gross injustice meted out to these poor black creatures. According to Martinus, Badenhorst's main concern is for him (Martinus) to feel sorry and ask God for forgiveness for killing the whiteman who raped his woman.

Martinus: *Dominee Badenhorst. He came to me everyday with his bible... He said to me, "Martinus, you have sinned. You have killed a man. But if you*

pray and ask God for forgiveness and he looks into your heart and sees that you are really sorry, then he will forgive you." (40).

Incidentally, Martinus is unrepentant about killing Andries Jacobus de Lange, for raping Thandeka. The feelings he has are for other things:

When I remember Thandeka I wonder where she is, I feel a big sadness inside me. Or when I just sit by the fire when it is cold and the tea is hot, that makes me feel good inside. Bread and meat, good! Rain! Rain falling in this dry Karoo - very good! I even find feelings for dead dogs. But for him – Andries Jacobus de Lange, the Deceased, the man I killed – No! (41).

In this play, the allusion to the Christian "Big Book" surfaces from a different angle. This time, it is a black man, Martinus, who makes reference to it in an attempt to criticize the cruelty of the white government and its people as represented by Gideon.

Martinus' emphasis on the sixth Commandment, "Thou shalt not kill", in the Holy Bible, becomes the prop on which the play stands. Martinus reminds Gideon that under no circumstance should anybody kill another. Gideon, however, has a different opinion especially in respect of self-defence, protection of women and children and defending one's country against communism. Ironically, both men are

murderers. They have both killed at different times in their lives.

Gideon on his own part also confesses being party to the common cases of the rape and the mortification of black women by their white masters and dared Martinus to kill him if he has the guts. Furthermore, he divulges the information on how he was one of those who for ten years wasted innocent black youths who were fighting for the freedom and emancipation of the blacks in South Africa. On one of those days, he shot and killed twenty-seven of those black young men.

This is reminiscent of the Sharpeville massacre on the 21st of March 1960 when those who were protesting the use of passes were shot dead by government forces. It also brings to mind the massacre, on the 16th of June 1976, of school children in Soweto who were protesting against poor education and against all government policies. These were incidents in the history of South Africa (Ndlovu. 267). One could say that history has provided Fugard with the "raw materials" with which he informs and structures his works.

Gideon Le Roux could not have told his blood chilling story without any sense of remorse and pain. The tragedy of the white man in South Africa is that he is tormented by the memory of the blacks he tortured and killed in that country and all other atrocities which he committed against humanity. At the end of his story, he is surprised that Martinus is not amused, "So don't just stand there and stare at me like a bloody baboon. Laugh!" (38).

Martinus (retorts): *Then why don't you laugh?*

Gideon: *You want to hear laughter? I'll give you fucking laughter. (He makes a violent and grotesque attempt at laughter that spirals away into the sound of his pain and torment. He is left totally defeated) (38).*

From the stage direction in brackets above, it is obvious that Gideon cannot even laugh at his own story as he had intended because the details are gory. Gideon is thus overtaken by the feeling of regret and resentment at his own cruelty. His wickedness stares him in the face and he becomes ashamed of himself. He finds out he cannot lie about the pain in his heart.

In this psychological drama, Fugard journeys deeply into the private recesses of the hearts of some of these murderers to reveal the terrible feelings they have after the merciless murder of the black masses as experienced by Gideon, the ex-soldier.

Gideon: *... Believe me I wasn't exaggerating when I said you can't eat your food afterwards. Me and another chap was detailed to take the bodies and dump them in a big hole. Oh boy! First we had to load them onto the back of the lorry, one by one – we had to wear gloves and masks it was so bad – then we drove over to the hole. (42).*

What pains Gideon more is the presence of an old woman who emerges from the bush and stands watching the enormity

of man's inhumanity to man as they drop the dead men into the hole one after the other. Apparently, one of the deceased was her son. Gideon, in spite of his heartlessness, is still human.

Gideon: *...Something just went inside me and it was snot and tears into that face mask like I never cried in my whole life... I tore off the mask and gloves and got off the lorry and went over to where the old woman had been standing, but she was gone. I ran into the bush to try and find her, I looked and called, but she was gone. That's where they found me the next day. They said I was just walking around in a dwaal (daze) p. 43*

Athol Fugard's *Playland* thus brings to light the hidden torment, degradation and the agony that accompany a sense of guilt for the atrocious actions and deeds of people whether known by others or not. Fugard, therefore, expresses this feeling of contrition by both blacks and whites for their regrettable acts and the need to ask for forgiveness. It is only after such confession that Gideon feels symbolically light. "It's getting light. Hell, have we been talking that long?" (p. 46)

The letting off of the guilty feeling on Gideon's conscience, by confession, makes him feel lighter and better. "It's getting light" could also mean they have talked far into the early morning of the next day when the first light of the day becomes visible as the New Dawn. It is only then that Gideon

and Martinus remember that they have not wished each other a Happy New Year.

One could also say that the play is an extension of the mindless killings and fury that characterized the South African Border war (1966 – 1989), which “was fought between the South African Defence Force and the South West African Police Force on one side and the South West African People’s Organization (SWAPO) supported by Cuban Troops and Russian armaments on the other” (p. 13). That was a war that had a lot of devastating effect on the South African people. Again, in Fugard’s words, “The Border War was a long and bitter struggle with heavy losses on both sides (and) Because of its traumatic effect on the South African psyche, it is referred to as South Africa’s Vietnam” (p. 3). Fugard has brought in the South African Border war in this play to capture fully the general mood at the time. South African people generally were under a lot of pressure during this period and there was a lot of destruction of lives going on at the time. That situation was traumatic and it affected the people’s psyche very severely. The Border war could, therefore, be said to be a metaphor of the deleterious effect of apartheid in South Africa.

It is not surprising that Gideon thus sees SWAPO as the devil itself. According to him, “If you want to see the devil I can show you him as well. He wears a Khaki uniform, he’s got an AK-47 in his hands” (p. 28)

Gideon: *The devil? (Hollow laugh) Ja, I killed him. How else do you think I’m here? That’s the only way*

you stayed alive. The law of the Jungle! That's what we use to say. Kill or be killed... and don't think about it. (p. 28).

The situation in South Africa as presented in *Playland* becomes so bad that happiness has to be provided outside the home via a happiness machine in the amusement park, *Playland*. That is why “everybody is sad when the happiness machine stop(s) and the lights go out” (p. 31) Gideon and Martinus thus rely on this machine and on their relationship with each other to get some glimpse of happiness and temporarily forget their sorrows.

It is important to mention in this paper that apartheid, which was promulgated as a decree in 1948 in South Africa, has come and gone, but its effect on the psyche of the South African people whether black or white is yet to be completely obliterated. As recent as November 4, 2002 (Monday) a white South African, Tom Vorster, was arrested in South Africa for allegedly planning to overthrow the black-run government of Thabo Mbeki. The incident published in *The Guardian*, (Nigerian Newspaper) of Wednesday, November 6, 2002, under the title “White South African Arraigned for Extremist Plot”, affirms the fact that the change in the *status quo* is yet to be fully accepted by the racists in that country. According to the report, “Police said Vorster had been linked to nine bombings in the black township of Soweto last week that killed one woman and which government officials blamed on white racists.” (p. 10)

If after one decade of the repeal of apartheid in South Africa in 1993, South Africans are yet to come to terms with the new relationship between the whites and the blacks, then one could imagine the tension and the uneasy calm that eclipsed that nation towards the end of apartheid in 1990 when Fugard's *Playland* was set. The play thus deals with the psychology of the people and with attitudes.

The whites, who had long been enjoying apartheid rule, cannot conceive of a situation where the lords (whites) themselves are now at par with the servants (blacks). Again, the blacks, who had undergone several decades of suppression and dehumanization find it difficult to accept and trust the whites in the new dispensation. So, the effect of the cruelty of apartheid law still hangs in the air. The feeling of distrust between the two races remain apparent during this period. Each party is agonized by the guilt of one crime or another committed during the struggle.

That explains the uneasy relationship that existed between the two characters at the beginning of the play which gradually fizzles out after their confessions to each other. The two characters could only come together in unity after expunging their guilt through confession and forgiveness.

In this play, Fugard has used two characters, as has been his practice. These characters are thus able to draw out their arguments through sometimes, long monologues in which they narrate their experiences with their friends or other *dramatis personae* who are not physically present in the play.

This epistolary form of the play is, thus, a technique which the playwright uses to enhance the production.

Fugard has also used in this play the "voice over" technique where a character is heard but never seen. Barney's voice, for instance, is heard over the Public Address System as he welcomes everyday to *Playland* and introduces himself as the Master of Ceremonies.

Barney (A voice over the PA system): *Testing, testing, one two, three, four, testing. Can you hear me Martinus?*

Martinus: (Shouting back): *I can hear you Baas Barney!*

Barney (On the PA): *Hello everybody, hello and hello again. Welcome to Playland. This is your Master of Ceremonies, your old friend "Barking Barney" Barkhuizen promising you a sensational, a spectacular evening of fun and thrills to end the year.* (p. 18)

Barney's voice is used occasionally as interjections while the music of *Playland* goes on. He intermittently makes some announcements and finally does the count down to 1990. This way, the audience is made to feel the presence of a character who is not physically visible.

Fugard's use of small cast is, therefore, a technique that makes his plays and ideas apt, distinct and very concentrated. Besides, the apartheid laws at the time could also have contributed to his use of small cast since there were numerous

Acts prohibiting the coming together of black people in large numbers. According to T.T. Moyana, the restrictive policy of apartheid was a phenomenon with which the theatre as a social function had to contend with at all levels in South Africa then. There were such Acts as: Unlawful Organizations Act (1960); Publication and Entertainments Act (1963) and others (p. 87-88). The censorious and repressive society at this period therefore dictated caution on the part of Fugard.

The characters in this play are the "nobodies" in the society. These are typical of Fugard's characters, who are not heroes but are the ordinary men and women of South Africa. Their condition, therefore, reflects the general condition of mankind.

The setting of most of Fugard's plays have always been very scanty, simple and sometimes with old and disused objects as props. Oftentimes the location of the play could be displayed on a name-board in the set as seen in *Playland*. "A large sign with the name PLAYLAND is prominently positioned. There is also an array of other gaudy signs advertising the various sideshows and rides - the Big Wheel, the Wall of Death, the Ghost Train and so on... Battered speakers of a PA system at the top of a pole" (p. 5). The above setting is an eloquent statement on the depleted and tawdry nature of the environment in which the play is set. This could, therefore, connote the poverty of the soul of South Africa during the apartheid regime.

Playland is structured into only five scenes. Furgard's limited use of 'Acts' and 'Scenes' enables him to sustain mood and tension throughout the play.

The language of *Playland* is that of the uneducated and the low class. There are also some interjections of the Afrikaner language throughout the play. It is the language of the ordinary people in the street. It is violent and full of expletives and epithets. The characters use a lot of obscene words and this carries the anger which the play demonstrates.

For instance, as Martinus discovers that Gideon has also committed murder having killed the SWAPO soldier, he is excited.

Martinus: (Pointing at Gideon and laughing triumphantly):
*Number six! You also. Number six! I'll see you in
 Hell Corporal Gideon Le Roux.*

Gideon: (With all the vulgarity he can master): *Fuck you!*

Martinus: (His laughter cut short): *Hey!*

Gideon: *That's right. I'll say it again. Fuck you! You can
 shove number six right up your arse. And don't
 point your fucking finger at me again. It's rude,
 my boy. (p. 28).*

It is important to mention that Athol Fugard uses the image of birds in flight as a pungent metaphor of peace, freedom and progress in life. Gideon keeps referring to the memory of the

good life with his father when they used to keep and tend the pigeons.

Gideon: *This is about the time when me and my dad use to wake up, get dressed and then go open the hok and let them out - even in winter – early morning, just before sunrise. Then we would go back into the kitchen and make our coffee and take it out into the backyard and watch them flying around. Sometimes they was up there in the sunlight, while we were still in the shadows! It always made us laugh... And there were no lies in that laugh. It was for real. That was how we felt inside (underlined, my emphasis) (p. 46)*

That real laughter sharply contrasts with Gideon's "hollow laugh" nearly all through the play. This is because there is nothing anymore to evoke a real and honest laughter.

Pigeons as birds of good omen connote peace. Fugard, thus, urges his audience to rise from their shadows and look forward to the peace and progress of humanity. This brings to mind the flying of kites in Fugard's '*Master Harold*'.... *And the Boys*. Flying of kites in this play brought joy to young Hally because it enabled him to look upwards and metaphorically rise with the kites to such an extent that he felt liberated and free from his sorrows.

Sam, the black servant in the play made that kite for Hally, his white master's son who feels humiliated and dejected by the father's drunkenness, to enable him (Hally) look up to

something that could give him joy. In Sam's words: "... if you really want to know, that's why I made you that kite. I wanted you to look up, be proud of something, of yourself..." (*Master Harold* p. 47).

Martinus in *Playland* thus urges Gideon to repair the hok and "start again with the pigeon birds" (p. 47). On the other hand, Gideon also encourages Martinus to "Get out of that little room" where he waylaid and killed Andries Jacobus de Lange for raping Thandeka. Gideon urges Martinus Zeoloe to rise above the memory of such grisly incident and embrace more noble and progressive issues.

Fugard is here demonstrating the deep sinful nature of man whether black or white. This represents the fact that the black man is as guilty as the white man even if it is not to the same degree. This is reminiscent of the familiar words in the Holy Bible that "if we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us". Both men are murderers, whether they killed one person or many, and are haunted by the sins of their past.

Fugard, in the light of this, urges both the blacks and the whites in that country to rise above their grudges, pains and bitterness by the singular act of forgiveness and forge ahead with life as new creatures who can do so much to assist one another. They have no choice regarding who should be their neighbours, as rightly pointed out by Gideon in an outburst of emotion:

Gideon: Do you think I wanted it to be this way? Do you think that if I could have chosen the other person in my world tonight it would be you? No such luck. We've got no choices man. I've got you and you've got me. Finish and Klaar. Forgive me or kill me. That's the only choice you've got (*Playland* p. 44).

It is the acceptance of this destiny, which has brought these two races together in one country that is portrayed in the words of Allister Sparks in *The Mind of South Africa*, "No blacks I have ever met envisage a future South Africa without whites. Not since the days of Nongqause and the frontier wars have they dreamt of driving the whites into the sea" (p. 250).

They, therefore, have no choice but to forgive one another. It is only after such forgiveness they can both soar high in the sky as the pigeon birds in *Playland* without any encumbrances of the past. They are, thus, able to rise above their guilt to a state of nobility. At the end of the play, Martinus and Gideon "walk off together".

This signifies hope for the unity of blacks, whites and coloureds in South Africa. They are bound together by a common destiny. That will be the new dawn for the entire people of South Africa whatever colour or race. It will be a new nation and a new people after apartheid. And by extension, it will be a new dawn for humanity.

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19. Human Rights Violations in South African Detention Prose

Toryma Emma Jenkwe

It is common place knowledge that apartheid rule in South Africa (1948-1994) was grounded in gross violation of the fundamental human rights of the blacks of the right to vote or to be elected into office and rather imposed the white minority on the black majority.

This imposition, in itself, did not only provide the basis for the abuses, but was a gross contravention of the tenets of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of the United Nations of 10th December, 1948 which proclaim that:

All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and right and are entitled to all the right and freedoms set forth in the declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status' (Basic Facts about the United Nations, iv.1)

Furthermore, the degree to which there were violations of the rights of the oppressed can be appreciated when one examines the curiousness of the laws that made these violations possible. The first of these laws was concerned with the restriction of the freedom of movement of black, known as the “Natives Act of 1952”, popularly called “Pass Laws”:

The act required all Africans to carry a reference book, which contains detailed information about the holder... failure to produce the reference book on demand is a criminal offence punishable by a fine of not more than the equivalent of US\$28 or imprisonment for not longer than one month. (Roscan 56-59)

Another law that seriously violated the rights of the blacks was the Group Areas Acts of 1945 (amended 1952, 1959, 1959). According to Roscan,

The act provided for the compulsory residence in location, native villages or hostels of Africans within an urban area. It regulated the entry of Africans into the areas and the place of their settlement. The presence of an African in a prescribed area for more than seventy-two hours is subject to severe restriction. (56)

Of course, all these laws were contrary to the stipulations made in the “Universal Declaration of Human Rights” which guarantee “the right of association and assembly, as well as the right to freedom from arbitrary arrest, detention exile” (Articles 3-21).

With such outrageous forms of legislation, it is no surprise that the number of incarcerations in apartheid South Africa at all given times was staggeringly high. Justice Steyn, a White South African jurist is quoted as having said that:

In 1959 there was an average daily admission of 49, 000 inmates in the prisons; 88, 000 in 1968; and in 1971, it had risen to 191, 000. (quoted in Legum 37)

Similarly, Jacobs reveals that:

This depressing reality of an inordinate number of South Africans having been criminalized as a result of an unjust political system is further compounded by the detention of about 73,000 people under Emergency in 1960- 32,000 in the period between 12th June, 1985 and September 1988 alone. (115)

It is thus, no wonder that the entire literary output in South Africa had reflected mainly the problem of human rights violations.

Detention literature generally has very similar features irrespective of its provenance. For example, Wole Soyinka's *The Man Died*, a detention memoir of the author's detention – experience during the Nigerian Civil War depicts the frustrating nature of solitary confinement, boredom, and the barbaric torture of detainees by security agents. Soyinka particularly laments the mind-breaking strategy that all dictators employ against the detainees they are afraid of. According to him,

I testify to the strange, sinister by-ways of the mind in solitary confinement, to the strange monsters it begets. It is certain that all captors and gaolers know it; that they create such conditions specially for those whose minds

they fear. Then, confidently, they await the rupture. It is necessary to keep in mind always that we know only of those who have survived the inhuman passage. (12)

These attempts at breaking down the minds and spirits of the detainees they fear, constitutes a violation of individual privacies and human rights deliberately made as we shall see in the four works to be studied in this paper, namely, D. Zwelonke's *Robben Island*, M. Matshoba's *Call Me Not A Man*, S. Sepamla's *A Ride on the Whirlwind* and M. Pheto's *And Night Fell*. All the works contain typical accounts of gross violations of the rights of victims in terms of their subjection to arbitrary arrest, prolonged detention without trial, and torture. Also, as autobiographical works (except *A Ride on the Whirlwind*), the texts seek to fulfil that unique role that autobiographical works have tried to fulfil in South Africa, which according to Watts,

... is to bear witness.... The autobiographies use the record of their own troubles and humiliations to draw the reader's attention not so much to themselves as suffering individuals, but to themselves as type- figures, prototypes for their community. (125)

The viewpoint is corroborated by Matshoba's remark in the prologue to *Call Me Not A Man* when he declares that his purpose of writing is:

To reflect through my works life on my own side of the fence, the black side: So that whatever may happen in future I may not be set down as a "blood thirsty

terrorist". So that I may say: these were the events, which shaped the Steve Bikos and Solomon Mahlangus and the many others who came before and after them. (x)

Zwelope's *Robben Island* eloquently achieves the autobiographical objective of drawing the reader's attention to the suffering of the author as a representative case of the plight of the blacks. It is about the detention – experiences of political detainees in the notorious prison island of that name, where they are subjected to forced labour, and endless torture aimed at breaking them down psychologically and thereafter extracting confessions from them.

The work is structured on a string of loosely connected episodes or experiences of the author which serve as its chapter titles, such as "Going to Meet Bekimpi", "The Island", "The Quarry" and so on. Much of its subject matter is taken from the actual historical events in South Africa of the 1950s and 1960s, especially the arrest and detention of notable African National Congress Activists like Nelson Mandela, Robert Sobukwe, Walter Sisulu and others after the Sharpeville Massacre of 21st March, 1960.

Two main narrative strands run through the work and dovetail into each other. One strand depicts the exploits of Danny the narrator, whose train journey ends in his arrest for subversive activities and the second one is an account of Bekimpi, 'another' political activist's life from his children to the time of his arrest. The rest of the story recounts Bekimpi's detention experience, his torture and eventual murder by security agents. Judging from the autobiographical character

of the work, one suspects that Bekimpi is simply a disguised figure standing for the author himself since the two characters in question (Danny and Bekimpi) undergo identical experiences.

The evocation of the dehumanising treatment meted out to suspects, as is depicted in the torture of Bekimpi, a mere suspect, shows not only the grossness of the human rights violations against blacks, but also the bestial character of the white security agents:

Bekimpi looked at him with his upside down eyes.... He saw murder in the eyes of his torturer. His muscles trembled. The lines of his naked body visibly convulsed.

There were lines of straight sinews, oblique and angular... His triceps stained against his ribs; both arms were tied to his body by a rope. His ribs were ugly corrugations shown up like those of a skeleton in the laboratory... Bekimpi in pain, a twitching backache cutting across his Spinal cord. The inspector brushed the prisoner's shrunken Stomach. The stomach had been off duty for three nights. The bowels fell down into the chest. The lungs felt that Weight, and their own weight crushed on the throat. The Wing-pipe was air-locked. Air struggled in and out in hard Panting respiration. (144-145)

This evocative depiction of Bekimpi's torture effectively elicits the gross abuse of the victim's human rights (*Basic Facts* iv I, Articles 3 to 21), which entitle "people to the right

to freedom from torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishments’.

Similar depictions of the barbarism of the South African security agents in the torture of suspects abound in South African fiction. This means that the blatant violation of people's right to freedom from torture or cruelty was frequent, thanks to its sanction by then South African authorities. In Alex La Guma's *In the Fog of the Seasons' End*, for example, there is this gruesome description of the torture of Elias Tekwane, a detainee arrested for running a guerrilla group:

They hustled him along the corridor. A uniformed man opened the door at the top of the steps to a basement room. The two security men let the prisoner go and the young man kicked him so that he rolled over the stone steps, crying out, the handcuffs preventing him from breaking his fall.

He lay groaning at the bottom of the steps. 'Man,' the sportsman said to his companion. 'We don't want to kill him yet'. He unzipped his fly and urinated off the steps into the prisoner's face. 'That must wake him up, ja'. The prisoner, dripping convulsed and retched, unable to hold back his stomach. (6-7)

This kind of treatment is clearly designed to humiliate the detainee and imbue him with a sense of worthlessness.

To go back to *Robben Island*, one sees that the severity of Bekimpi's torture reaches a point at which he can only draw an analogy between himself (and by extension/ the blacks at large) and the travails of Jesus Christ at his crucifixion when he declares in exasperation:

I will suffer like Jesus Christ. I will die like Jesus Christ for my people... I forgot my own sufferings and hunger. In my mind, I saw the pain on the face of Christ, saw Him looking to Heaven and in painful gasps crying Eli, Lama Sabachani? The map of Africa was imprinted on the face of Bekimpi. The continent of strife and suffering (17).

This reference to the travails of Christ on the cross elevates the black man's sufferings in South Africa to an archetypal level, thus drawing the attention of the world community to its singular egregiousness.

The ubiquity in the violation of the rights of the oppressed in apartheid South Africa, is again depicted in the profile of even the minor characters. For example, Muzi, Makanna, Simon Khuboni, Mountain Langbon and Pahle, all died in detention because they were denied medical care even at the stage when their illnesses became critical, and Joe, on the other hand, was callously beaten to death by the warder. All these tragedies occurred even before the detainees' guilt was proved through the judicial process. This violates their:

Right to recognition as a person before the law: equal protection of the law.... The right to a fair trial and public hearing by an independent and impartial tribunal: the

right to be presumed innocent until proved guilty. (Basic Facts... iv.i)

Like *Robben Island*, Matshoba's *Call Me Not A Man* is also basically a record of the incidents of the violations of the author's rights, especially, the unlawful detention, torture and institutionalised oppression of blacks. The work is episodic and is organized around seventeen episodes which form the chapter-titles. Characterisation in the work mainly serves the purpose of unravelling the story which consists of distinct events which are linked together by Thandi, the narrator's experiences. He acts as a witness to the events in which he is also a participant as well as victim.

The epigram to the work itself reveals the degree of rape of the human rights of the blacks and the appalling level of dehumanisation to which they have been sunk. It says:

Call Me Not A Man

*For neither am I a man in the eyes of the law Nor am I
a man in the eyes of my fellow man (18).*

The import of the epigram is that he has been stripped of all known elements of humanity. One major problem identified in most prison memories is the deliberate debasement of the detainee as one can see in the epigram above and this type of experience is expressed by Mangakis, who is quoted by Soyinka as saying:

*When a dictatorship is imposed on your country, the very
first thing you feel, the very first day.... the first feeling is*

humiliation. You are being deprived of the right to consider yourself worthy of responsibility for your own life and destiny. This feeling of humiliation grows day by day, as a result of the oppressor's unceasing effort to force your mind to accept all the vulgarity which makes up the abortive mental world of dictators. You feel as if your reason and your human status were being deeply insulted everyday. And then comes the attempt to impose on you by fear, acceptance of various barbarous actions of theirs that you hear about, or that you actually see them commit against your fellow human beings. You begin to live with the daily humiliation of fear, and you begin to loathe yourself. (14)

One major instance of the crass inhumanity of jailers is depicted in the chapter titled "A Pilgrimage to the Isle of Makana" (i.e. Robben Island Prison). During a visit to Robben Island Prison which he refers to sarcastically as "the holiest of holies" the narrator undergoes great shock at the sight of a dying black prisoner abandoned even in his helpless condition, by his white jailers. Instinctively, the narrator questions the entire purpose of existence if human beings would undergo such painful conditions:

The man was old and sick. So sick his limbs did not respond to his mind, or if they did, the pangs of his ailment would not allow it... the face was set resigned to an unfortunate fate, and the eyes indifferent to life, I hated those who had done that to the man. I hated God for condoning it. There is no God; thought i.... whatever

phenomenon brought about the universe occurred, and that was that.... (132-133).

These horrible experiences undergone by the oppressed give rise to extreme feelings of self-abasement which culminate in these painful musings expressed by the narrator about his dilemma:

By bodging, lying, resisting where it is possible, bolting when I am already cornered, parting with invaluable money, sometimes calling my sisters into the game to get amorous with my captors, allowing myself to be slapped on the mouth in front of my womenfolk and getting sworn at with my mother's private parts, that component of me which is man has died countless times in one life time. Only a shell of me remains to tell you of the other man's plight which is in fact my own. For what is suffered by another man in view of my eyes is suffered also by me. The grief he knows is a grief I know... out of the same bitter cup do we drink (18).

The pathos contained in these statements is overwhelming when we see the degree to which his life and those of the entire oppressed have been so cheapened and debased as to become almost worthless.

Sipho Sepamla's *A Ride on the Whirlwind* (1981) recreates the events around the Soweto uprising in July 1976 in which over six hundred black children were massacred. The children-activists involved are Mandla (the leader), Sello, Roy, Dan Mantsho, Bouysi and Keke. They collaborate with

Mzi, a veteran revolutionary fighter who aids them to destroy some specific security personnel and strategic targets. Mzi and Mandla successfully destroy a police station, a railway station and eventually kill Sergeant Rampa but they are eventually betrayed by “one of their own” – Noah, a black shebeen owner. With the barest of some of the activists, the security operatives, as usual, subject them to serious bouts of torture, thus violating their rights as human beings. As observed by Abubakar,

Sepamla's depiction of interrogation not only demonstrates apartheid's brutality but shows the discrepancy between commitment to an action, courage and the limit of the human body to endure pain. Interrogation reveals the tussles between conviction and will-power and how this conflict of impulses manifests itself in motivation, action, responsibility. Sepamla depicts the predicament of the activists by signifying their face-off with torture, by examining the elasticity of their individual courage and endurance and their ability to withhold information about the movement and its leaders.

In the foregoing passage, the critic tries to point out the different levels at which different detainees are able to hold out on divulging sensitive information about their organizations under situations of torture.

A Ride on the Whirlwind has its share of scenes of torture and violations of the rights of detainees. For example, one of the boys, Roy is subjected to cruel beating as reproduced below:

The cop charged at him. It happened so suddenly, so quickly, poor Roy never had the chance to drop his tired arms in time. The black cop landed a blow on the stomach. His massive hands carry so much power the blow felled Roy. He was bundled up at the cop's feet not before being smacked on the cheek, punched on the stomach again, chopped on both shoulders with karate blows so that he sagged on his knees. (181)

Roy remains resolute in his determination not to divulge the operational secrets of their organization and he thus faces the prospect of further torture.

This situation is in agreement with Abubakar's observation that:

Sepamla's narration of Roy's plight shows that the relationship between the resilient activist and police interrogators is characterised by scorn, nonchalance, and hatred and the result is often fatal. At the end Roy is killed by the police but even in this, it takes the whole team of Captains Brand, Strydom, Praatnou, Segeants Ndlovu, and Batata to torture Roy to death. (219)

These deaths that result from the torture of victims are the ultimate forms of human violation and degradation. The last work we shall examine is Molete Pheto's *And Night Fell* which is also an account of the detention experiences of the author in different South African jails. It is a prison memoir which, according to Jacobs,

... is best approached within the general category of Autobiography... It shares with autobiography that combination of a process of self-discovery with the art of self-invention. (125)

Like the previous works examined, this one too is organized around twenty-three episodes, with each episode revealing some distinct violations of the author's rights as a human being. Accused of recruiting terrorists for training abroad, the narrator languishes in different jails for nine months before his acquittal, in the course of which he is routinely subjected to severe beatings and torture.

One worrisome feature in the narrator's account of his experiences is the sadistic character displayed by his white tormentors, as narrated in this typical case:

Then the blows began. Suddenly, hailstones of them. From all angles, incessant visser. The new one visser. Many blows I could not see. I collided with the blows. In the air. On my feet. On the floor. I had become a dingdong, as if they were playing ping pong with a human table tennis ball. (100)

All along, the tortures were just bent on getting him to admit, under duress, that he was guilty of the offence for which he was accused. These physical and psychological tortures could become so intense and mind-bending that a victim would be forced to tell lies just to secure some respite as it happened in the case of the author. This experience, indeed, confirms Jacobs' assertion that

... (there is always) the need for the prisoners, in order to survive in such a system, to cultivate a particular frame of mind. Lewin refers to it as the ability on the one hand to accommodate the system so as not to be ground down by it, yet on the other hand constantly to fight it so as to retain one's self-respect. (121)

This fighting “to retain one’s self-respect” is what we notice in a discussion between Elias Tekwane and one member of the security group in *In the Fog of the Season’s End*. It goes thus:

You want me to cooperate. You have shot my people when they have protested against unjust treatment: you have torn people from their homes, imprisoned them, not for stealing or murder, but not having your permission to live. Our children live in rags and die of hunger. And you want me to cooperate with you? It’s impossible.

There was dryness in his throat and he was surprised at himself for being able to say these words so directly to the man behind the desk. (123).

The exchange, part of which is quoted here, is delicate rhetoric through which the torturer and his victim “size up” the sensitivities of each of the contending groups. It is a superb strategy in psychological warfare.

We have seen from the foregoing exposition, the gross violation of the human rights of the oppressed (as enshrined

in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 10th October 1984) which is copiously depicted in all forms of detention prose. We have also highlighted the tendentious legislation that gave backing to these abuses, especially during the apartheid era, the extent of the degradation of the oppressed and the sadistic character of the oppressors. The mind-set of typical oppressors and the psychological dynamics that operate between them and their victims have also been subjected to scrutiny.

In the light of the foregoing, one is convinced by Watts' opinion on the imperative need felt by ex-detainees to write down their experiences which he says, is

... a request for reassurance that they in fact have an identity, that they have rescued the fragments and shards of a personality from the systematic official attempt to eradicate it. (115)

When they write, they indeed successfully rescue their personalities which are all but extirpated by the brutal and mind-altering tortures inflicted on them by white security agents with the singular aim of dehumanising them.

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20. Selected Poems of Manuel Lopes in English

Ebenezer Adedeji Omoteso

Introduction

José Osório de Oliveira rightly proclaimed: “A literatura cabo-verdiana é uma realidade” (Cape Verdean literature is a reality) (1951:29). Manuel Lopes, poet, writer, critic and painter, whose selected poems are translated to English (perhaps for the first time) and commented upon in this paper played an important role as a pioneer of modern Cape Verdean literature, having collaborated in *Claridade* (*Clarity*), the Cape Verdean review of arts and letters, founded by him and three other Cape Verdean intellectuals, namely Baltasar Lopes, João Lopes, Jorge Barbosa and Jaime Figueiredo in 1936.¹ The review clearly signalled the era of modern Cape Verdean literature, marking a departure from the attitude of imitating writers of Portugal, the then metropolis, and Europe. This attitude dominated the writings of the preceding classical writers of the 19th century and early 20th century.

The objective of this paper is to comment on the endeavour to translate some selected poems of Manuel Lopes into English. I will discuss some of the problems encountered in the process. Lastly, I will briefly discuss some of the major themes of the poems in order to show the importance of modern Cape Verdean poetry, especially Lopes’ poetry and justify the efforts made to translate them. It is expected that

this study will serve as an introduction of modern Cape Verdean poetry to many readers who are not familiar with the body of African literature published in Portuguese.

In addition to composing poems, Manuel Lopes, one of the three principal *Claridosos* (the name by which the collaborators of the review, *Claridade*, were called), others being Baltasar Lopes (pseudonym: Osvaldo Alcântara) and Jorge Barbosa, has published three prose narratives, namely *Chuva Braba* (1936), *O Galo cantou na baía* (1959) and *Os Flagelados do vento leste* (1960). His literary productions played a very important role in defining Cape Verdean regionalism: Cape Verde is a land peopled by inhabitants, whose nature is largely determined by natural and economic conditions, such as drought, famine and joblessness. This study therefore focuses on some selected poems from his two volumes of poetry, entitled *Poemas de quem ficou* (Poems of the one who stayed) (1949) and *Crioulo e outros poemas* (Creole and other poems) (1964) and it should be noted that majority of the poems that were published in the preceding volume were reproduced without any significant change(s) in the succeeding publication. Of all the poems translated in this paper, only “A menina feia” (The ugly girl) is taken from the first volume because it is only published in Lopes’ first poetic publication. Among the others, only “A garrafa” (The bottle), “Sputniks” and “Mochinho” do not appear in the first volume.

Problems associated with translating poetry

Commenting on the translation of literary texts of modern African writers, Ukoyen (1997) opines that poetic works of Léopold Sédar Senghor, one of the founding fathers of Senegalese literature in French, have not been so readily translated to English, because of the peculiar problems associated with the translation of poetry. In view of Frost's famous dictum that "Poetry is what gets lost in translation," Eoyang (1982:iiv) concurs that the translation of literature, poetry inclusive, is a hazardous enterprise. Prawer (1973:79) reiterates this view, while explaining fully the factors that make translation of literary texts hazardous:

After all, semantic and phonetic richness of a work diminishes with translation, a phenomenon that partly explains why works in translation do not accurately reflect the character of the literary tradition to which their original versions belong. Moreover, these works no longer partake in the history of languages in which they are originally written.

Fortunately, the task of translating Manuel Lopes' poetry does not lead to doing harm to the original work, not because the poems are not good, but rather because to Lopes, what matters is the message. He has therefore focused on bringing out his message of love for his people clearly, without complicated artistic devices and techniques. This makes translating his poems easy. His initial interest in classical poetry, before his conversion to Modernism, explains his occasional use of fixed rhyme scheme. In fact, most of the

poems are composed in free verse, which also makes translating the poems easy.

Inevitably, one finds it impossible to communicate the countless nasal sounds that are a major feature of Portuguese language. Thus, it is not easy to express the sound and meaning conveyed by the use of nasal sounds in poems, such as “A menina feia,”² and “Nocturnos” (Nocturnes).³ One also notes the presence of special Portuguese terms, for which English equivalents cannot be easily found. For instance, it is not possible to express Portuguese terms for diminutives with equivalent English terms. The term *rapariguinha*⁴ combines the noun (*rapariga*) and the diminutive term (*inha*), an (affix), while English simply makes use of an adjective to render the same idea: small (article) girl (noun).

In his *Comparative Literary Studies: An introduction*, Prawer (1973:79) comments that three basic kinds of translation can be distinguished: (a) metaphrase, or turning an author word by word, and line by line, from one language into another; (b) paraphrase, or translation with latitude, where the author is kept in view by the translator, although his words are not so strictly followed as his sense; and (c) imitation, where the translator assumes the liberty to vary from the words and sense, to forsake them if need be and take only general hints from the original.

In translating poetry, Daniel Weissbort (1989:x) seems to support the approach suggested and employed by Stanley Burnshaw in his two anthologies, *The Poem Itself* (1960) and *The Hebrew Poem* (1966). Burnshaw (1989:x) has argued in

the preface to his former work that since poetry could not be poetically translated, the most satisfactory procedure was to provide the non-linguist reader with a lexical and contextual commentary and an “ad verbum”, non-literary translation alongside the original, thereby enabling him to experience the source text for himself.

In view of these considerations about translating poetry, the metaphrase approach has been used to translate the selected poems of Manuel Lopes in this paper. This consists of translating the poems word by word and line by line from Portuguese to English. As much as possible, the sentence pattern or structure has been maintained. In addition, I have endeavoured to produce the original, line by line, alongside the translated version. This will enable the reader to experience the source text for himself.

Reasons for translating Manuel Lopes’ poems into English

Regardless of the of problems that were encountered in the course of translating the selected poems of Manuel Lopes, I consider the task a worthwhile endeavour and a fruitful one, particularly in view of the need to diffuse knowledge, especially knowledge of African literature written in Portuguese, which happens to be the least translated among African literatures written in modern European languages. Ukoyen (1997) raises this issue in his perceptive paper on translation of modern African literature. For instance, major critical works on African literature are still largely limited to writers from English and French-speaking African countries.⁵

I also fully support Eoyang's assertion (1982:vii) on the need to translate literature:

Still, whatever the impossibilities of translation and the inadequacies of translators, the task of translating worthwhile literature to readers in other languages is an honourable and laudable enterprise.

Without doubt the task of translating literary texts is indeed an honourable and laudable enterprise because it helps to promote discussions and debates among readers of world literatures.

Major themes of Manuel Lopes' poetry

Modern Cape Verdean writers, especially the *Claridosos*, are praiseworthy for commenting on their people's suffering, capturing and exalting into art the mundane, mind-numbing grind of daily life. It is evident that modern Cape Verdean poets, especially Manuel Lopes, have learnt the lesson of poeticising the social reality of their people and native land as one of the gains from Modernism through the influence of Brazilian Modernist and regionalist writers.⁶ The titles of Manuel Lopes' two volumes of poetry, namely *Poemas de quem ficou* (Poems of the one who stayed) and *Crioulo e outros poemas* (Creole and other poems), clearly reflect the poet's commitment to valorise his native land and the social reality of the people. Let us recall that *Kriolu* (Creole) usually stands for the popular language spoken by all Cape Verdeans. It also refers to the average Cape Verdean, a product of the mixture of different socio-cultural and ethnic compositions.

Both works are therefore remarkable for their telluric qualities. It is therefore evident that the poems that have been selected from his poetry and translated here prominently show Manuel Lopes as a translator of the collective (and individual) dilemma facing his people.

The function of the poet, as the mouth-piece of the people, is particularly discerned in poems such as “Nocturnos,”⁷ “Sputniks,”⁸ “Terra” (Earth),⁹ which denounce the horrible socio-economic conditions prevalent in Cape Verde: lack of jobs, grounded industries, deserted ports and warehouses. They also express the poet’s disenchantment with famine and unidentified diseases, both of which kill in thousands, especially during the colonial era. We read in “Sputniks”:

*Para quê a Lua?
Para quê Marte ou Vénus?
Para que satélites artificiais
e astronautas
se a terra é nua
e é nos
nossos milharais
que há sede, e há fome
nas nossas choupanas
onde se morre de doenças sem nome?*¹⁰

(Why Moon?
Why Mars and Venus?
Why artificial satellites
and astronauts
if the soil is barren

and if in
our maize-fields
there is thirst, and there is hunger
in our huts
where people die of unidentified diseases?)

The poem “Sputniks” also shows that another important question that preoccupies the poet is that of the usefulness of human knowledge. The poet evokes the important developments that have taken place in space exploration, but wonders if Science could not serve humanity better, by looking for the cure of human diseases and by putting end to hunger and famine, factors that are responsible for killing thousands of people.

In other poems, such as “Poema de quem ficou” (Poem of the one who stayed) and “Cais” (Shore), the poet also denounces the insular conditions of the islands, which in addition to the factors stated earlier, lead people to emigrate or better still, evade; thus the themes of evasion and fascination of far-away lands feature prominently in his poems. For instance, the themes of evasion and fascination of far-away lands are dominant in “Poema de quem ficou”:

*Eu não te quero mal
por este orgulho que tu trazes,
por este ar de triunfo iluminado
com que tu voltas...*

.....

*Que o teu irmão que ficou
sonhou coisas maiores ainda,*

*mais belas que aquelas que conheceste...
Crispou as mãos à beira-do-mar
e teve saudades estranhas, de terras estranhas,
com bosques, com rios, com outras
montanhas
-- bosques de névoa, rios de prata,
montanhas de oiro -
que nunca viram teus olhos
no mundo que percorreste ...*¹¹

(I do not wish you evil
for this pride you bring,
for this air of enlightened triumph
with which you return...

.....

That your brother who stayed
dreamt of bigger things,
more beautiful than those you saw...
He wrung his hands at the seashore
and had strange longings, for strange lands with other
mountains
- foggy forests, rivers of silver,
mountains of gold –
which your eyes never saw
in the world that you visited...)

In fact, the poetic creations of Manuel Lopes are underscored by the constant obsession of distant lands, which Artur Augusto (1937:4) says is characteristic of islanders. Significantly, Lopes shows in his poetry that his love for his land is more powerful than that of far-away lands.

Apart from the haunting question of staying or departing from his native land for the far-away lands in search of greener pastures, one also notices the motifs of love and morality in “A menina feia” (The ugly girl).¹² What about the question of man’s destiny? Indeed, in poem after poem, such as “Poema de quem ficou” (Poem of the one who stayed),¹³ “Terra” (Earth),¹⁴ “Naufrágio” (Shipwreck),¹⁵ “A Garrafa” (The Bottle)¹⁶ and “Mochinho”,¹⁷ one encounters questions about the destiny of the average Cape Verdean. Is it to stay and confront the rigours of tilling the land, with little or nothing coming out of it, or to escape from the inhospitable climate of his native land for foreign lands? We read in “Mochinho”:

*Destino de todos – colher
se Deus escrever a boa nova
no livrão que ninguém lê*

*Se a chuva não vem, e a nuvem faz troça
Mochinho
o destino de todos
são lágrimas, ou roça
de S. Tomé.*¹⁸

(Destiny of all – to harvest
if God writes the good news
in the big book which nobody reads

If it does not rain, and the clouds mock
Mochinho
destiny of all

are tears, or plantation
of São Tomé).

However, the poem “Poema de quem ficou” (Poem of the one who stayed) shows that the poet throws his support on the side of the Cape Verdean who prefers staying in his native land to going abroad.

One cannot but comment on the tone and mood of these poems. Dominant in some of these poems is the tone of defiance, showing the poet’s personal attitude to life. In “Poema de quem ficou” (Poem of the one who stayed), he chooses to remain while others are departing and, loves what others are despising in “A menina feia” (The ugly girl). And in “Cais” (Shore), he brings himself to the point of being contented with his destiny, despite his inability to emigrate. This defiant tone is also a result of the Cape Verdean’s resolve not to despair or be discouraged in the face of the many socio-economic problems confronting him. The moods of sadness and helplessness prevail in poems like “Nocturnos” (Nocturnes), and “Naufrágio” (Shipwreck), a consequence of man’s helplessness in the battle of life, especially in confrontation with climatic elements and other factors beyond his power. The poet can only empathise with his suffering people. This can be seen in the following lines of “Nocturnos”:

*Em que pensas, carvoeiro debruçado
no cais deserto, sobre o mar,
cuja sombra, como a um morto,
o mar iluminado*

embala?
Sonhas a voz do porto
Que já perdeu a fala

Carvoeiro dos tempos idos,
--- peça duma engrenagem inútil
tombada no chão:
eu sinto o drama do teu rosto limpo
onde não há vestígios de carvão!...¹⁹

(What are you thinking about stooped coalman
at the deserted wharf,
whose shade, like that of the dead,
the lighted sea
rocks?
Are you dreaming of the port
which has lost its voice?

Former coalman,
-- piece of a useless machinery
fallen on the floor:
I feel the drama of your clean
which bears no trace of coal!...)

What of resignation? This can be seen in the poem “Mochinho”, where the poet evokes the destiny of the common Cape Verdean, which is to till the soil, while resigning himself to fate.

Also, the attitude of trying to understand one's situation or destiny is clearly visible in these poems. This comes about

from the poet's perception of the grim living conditions of his people; especially their futile efforts to better their lives. Consequently, he finds out that it is better to endure the situation, while working out one's salvation, although, not necessarily through escapism.

Concluding remarks

It has been very easy to translate these selected poems of Manuel Lopes to English. The poems represent a tip of the iceberg in view of the many poetic creations of the *Claridade* group, but they amount to a significant fraction of modern Cape Verdean poetry. In these poems, one sees the Cape Verdean poet expose himself and his people, as he voices their pains, sorrows and desires, as well as their expectations, fantasies, fears, resignation and hope.

Selected Poems of Manuel Lopes

‘A menina feia’**Essa menina de aldeia**

era tão feia,
 que só saía ao sol-posto!
 Um dia falei-lhe, -- amei-a.
 Era tão feio o seu rosto,
 era tão feia, tão feia,
 que dava pena e desgosto!
 Mas nesse dia
 meu coração despertou:
 desgosto mudou-se em gosto:
 era tão belo
 o que eu via
 nela, por trás do seu rosto

‘Poema de quem ficou’

Para Cândido de Vasconcelos
 Eu não te quero mal
 por este orgulho que tu trazes,
 por este ar de triunfo iluminado
 com que tu voltas...

O mundo não é maior
 que uma pupila de teus olhos:
 tem a grandeza
 das tuas inquietações e das
 tuas revoltas.

Que o teu irmão que ficou
 sonhou coisas maiores ainda,
 mais belas que aquelas que

Crispou as mãos à beira-do-mar
 e teve saudades estranhas, de
 terras estranhas, com bosques,
 com rios, com outras montanhas
 - bosques de névoa, rios de prata,

‘The ugly girl’**This village girl**

was so ugly,
 That she only went out after sunset!
 One day I spoke to her, -- I loved her.
 So ugly was her face,
 o ugly, so ugly,
 that it made one have pity and disgust!..
 But this day
 my heart was stirred up:
 disgust turned into liking:
 so beautiful was
 what I saw
 in her behind her face ...

‘Poem of the one who stayed’

To Cândido de Vasconcelos
 I do not wish you evil
 for this pride you bring,
 for this air of enlightened triumph
 with which you return...

The world is not bigger
 than a pupil of your eyes:
 has the grandeur
 of your restlessness and
 of your aversion

That your brother who stayed
 dreamt of bigger things,
 more beautiful than those you saw...
 conheceste...

He wrung his hands at the seashore
 and had strange longings, for strange
 lands with forests, with rivers, with
 other mountains
 - foggy forests, rivers of silver,

montanhas de oiro --
que nunca viram teus olhos
no mundo que percorreste ...

**'Nocturnos'
(Porto Grande)**

Para Augusto Casimiro

I

Luzes, raras, da baía
Saltitam na água macia
- enguias de ouro a brincar
numa alcativa negra de veludo
e multiplicam-se no mar
no mar sonâmbulo e mudo.

Perpassam gritos
como os que se calam dentro de
gente
Fantasmas negros de lanchas
enchem o porto de manchas,
silenciosamente...

II

Rapariguinha solitária

-- quinze gastas primaveras
o que é que esperas
olhando a noite extraordinária
e o mar macio?

Algum vapor que entre no porto
vazio?
Alguma ilusão a mais?
Algum abraço mais generoso?
ou uma palavra mais linda?
de algum naufrágio de amor junto
do cais
ou no mar-alto ainda?

mountains of gold --
which your eyes never saw
in the world that you visited...

**Nocturnes'
(Porto Grande)**

To Augusto Casimiro

I

Scattered lights of the bay
jump about on the water
- playful golden eels
on the black velvet carpet
and they multiply on the sea
on the sea somnabulistic and still

Shouts die down
like those shut up inside

Phantasms of black launches
fill the port with specks,
silently...

II

Small solitary girl

-- fifteen wasted springs --
for what do you wait
looking at the extraordinary night
and the soft sea?

Some steamer that disembarks at the
empty port
Some more illusion?
Some more generous embrace?
or a more pleasant word
of some lover shipwrecked at the wharf
or still on the high seas?

III

Em que pensas, carvoeiro
debruçado
no cais deserto, sobre o mar,
cuja sombra, como a um morto,
o mar iluminado
embala?
Sonhas a voz do porto
Que já perdeu a fala

Carvoeiro dos tempos idos,
- peça duma engrenagem inútil
tombada no chão:
eu sinto o drama do teu rosto limpo
onde não há vestígios de carvão!... which bears no trace of coal!...

‘Cais’

Nunca parti deste cais
e tenho o mundo na mão.
Para mim nunca é de mais
responder sim
cincoenta vezes a cada não.
Por cada barco que me negou
cincoenta partem por mim
e o mar é plano e o céu azul sempre
que vou!
Mundo pequeno para quem ficou...

‘Terra’

Para Ribeiro Couto
Endreitou o busto suado.
O sol traçou a sua sombra esguia
na terra remexida.
Pensou no mar enorme,
nas velas perdidas sobre a vasta
monotonia
do mar enorme,

III

What are you thinking about stooped
coalman
at the deserted wharf,
whose shade, like that of the dead,
the lighted sea
rocks?
Are you dreaming of the port
which has lost its voice?

Former coalman,
- piece of a useless machinery
fallen on the floor:
I feel the drama of your clean
face
which bears no trace of coal!...

‘Shore’

I never left this shore
and I have the world in my hand.
It is never too much for me
to answer yes
fifty times to each no.
For each boat that rejected me
fifty go through me
and the sea is even and the sky
always
blue whenever I depart
Small world for him who stayed...

‘Earth’

To Ribeiro Couto
He straightened the sweat-covered torso.
The sun traced his tall shadow
on the turned earth.
His thought dwelt on the enormous sea
on the sails carried away on the vast
monotony of the enormous sea,

nos temporais e nos naufrágios,	on the tempests and shipwrecks
nas vidas perdidas dos marinheiros,	on the lost lives of the seamen,
nas lutas inúteis,	on the vain struggles,
na escuridão sem fé do homem nos	on the grim situation of the man without
portos faith in foreign ports.	estrangeiros.

Limpou da frente o suor	He wiped away the sweat from his fore head
-------------------------	--

no gesto simbólico de quem faz o	in a symbolic gesture of someone
da cruz	making sinal
	the sign of the cross.
- O suor que cai na terra maternal,	- The sweat dripping on the mother earth,
leva o milagre fecundante do amor	- carries the fertilizing miracle of love -

Olhou ao redor	He looked around
viu as montanhas altas e tranquilas,	saw the high and still mountains
o céu azul,	he blue sky,
- sobre o vale pairava um vasto	over the valley hung a deep silence.
silêncio.	
E sentiu-se protegido e abençoado,	He felt protected and blest,
seguro e livre na sua doce	sheltered and free in his pleasant secular
escravidão	
antiga	serfdom.

O sol desenhou uma sombra de	The sun highlighted a semi-naked
dorso nú,	stooped shadow
Curvado, e uma enxada cavando,	and a hoe, digging, digging cavando
na mãe-terra amiga...	the friendly mother-earth...

‘Naufrágio’

Para João Lopes
 Ai a tristeza do vento chorando
 Ai as nuvens indo a solta
 em louca corrida
 medrosas, fugindo a mão
 estendida...
 ai a solidão dos montes
 despidos, a nossa volta
 onde a vida aos poucos se consome

‘Shipwreck’

To João Lopes
 Alas the sadness of the weeping wind
 Alas the clouds going loose
 on a mad race
 fearfully, fleeing from the stretched
 hand...
 alas the solitude of the naked mountains
 around us
 where life is gradually frittered away

- seios nús ensanguentados
onde as raízes
morrem de fome ...

... E nos rostos ensombrados
rondam saudades: - paizes
navegam velas:-- distâncias...

... Gestos parados
gritos sem voz...

Dorme o Nosso Senhor Só
dentro de cada um de nós
envolvido pelo pó
que o vento remexeu e levantou

Ai este Atlantico triste
que nos deu a nostalgia
dum mundo que só existe
no sonho que ele povoou ...

'A Garrafa'

Que importa o caminho

da garrafa que atirei ao mar?

Que importa o gesto que a colheu?

Que importa a mão que a tocou

- se foi a criança

ou o ladrão

ou filósofo

quem libertou a sua mensagem

e a leu para si ou para os outros?

Que se destrua contra os recifes

ou role no areal infindável

ou volte às minhas mãos

na mesma praia erma donde a
lancei

ou jamais seja vista por olhos
humanos

que importa?

... se só de atirá-la às ondas

- naked blood-stained breasts
where roots
die of hunger...

... And on the gloomy faces
nostalgia: - countries
navigate sails: - distances

... Still gestures
houts without voice...

Our Lord sleeps
inside each one of us
covered by powder
which the wind stirred up and carried

Alas this melancholic Atlantic
that gave us the nostalgia
of a world which only exists
in the dream that it filled...

'The Bottle'

Does it matter the way

of the bottle which I threw into the sea?

Does it matter the gesture that collected
it?

Does it matter the hand that touched it?

- whether it was a child

or a thief

or a philosopher?

who freed its message

and read it to himself or to others?

Were it to be destroyed against the reefs

or rolled in the endless beach

or returned to my hands

on the deserted beach from where I threw
it

or never seen by human eyes

does it matter?

... if only by throwing it into the

vagabundas
eu libertei o meu destino
da sua prisão?...

‘Sputniks’

Para quê a Lua?
Para quê Marte ou Vénus?
Para que satélites artificiais
e astronautas
se a terra é nua
e é numbers
nossos milharais
que há sede, e há fome
nas nossas choupanas
onde se morre de doenças sem
nome? diseases?

“Mochinho”

Mochinho,
teu destino é seres espantalho
de corvos,
tocar lata e mandar funda
de desamparinho a desamparinho
na merada de milho a arder

Destino de pai-Zé-da-Cruz é cavar
cavar e cavar,
e da mãe-Zepa é meter quatro
grãos em cada cova
e cobrir com a terra num jeito do pé

Destino de todos—colher
se Deus escrever a boa nova
no livrão que ninguém lê

Se a chuva não vem, e a nuvem faz
troça

Mochinho
destino de todos
são lágrimas, ou roça
de S. Tomé

vagabond waves
freed my destiny
from its prison?...

‘Sputniks’

Why Moon?
Why Mars and Venus?
Why artificial satellites
and astronauts
if the soil is barren
and if in
our maize-fields
there is thirst, and there is hunger
in our huts
where people die of unidentified

“Mochinho”

Mochinho,
your destiny is to be scarecrow of
ravens,
to beat tins and pull sling
from confusion to confusion
in the burning corn field

Destiny of father -Zé-da-Cruz is to dig
dig and dig
and of mother -Zepa is to put four
rains in each hole
and to cover with soil using her leg

Destiny of all – to harvest
if God writes the good news
in the big book which nobody reads

If it does not rain, and the clouds mock

Mochinho
destiny of all
are tears, or plantation
of São Tomé.

Notes

- 1 See Manuel Ferreira, "Consciência Literária Cabo-verdiana: Quatro gerações – *Claridade, Certeza, Suplemento Literário, Boletim do Liceu Gil Eanes*," *Estudos Ultramarinos*, 3 (1959), 38-39.
- 2 Manuel Lopes, *Poemas de quem ficou* (Angra do Heroísmo, Açores: Author's Edition, 1949), p.17.
- 3 *Ibid.* pp. 64-66.
- 4 *Ibid.* p.17.
- 5 See Florence Stratton. *Contemporary African Literature and the Politics of Gender* (London & New York: Routledge, 1994); Bernth Lindfors. *Cross/Cultures 14: Comparative Approaches to African Literatures* (Amsterdam-Atlanta: Rodopi, 1994).
- 6 Close reading of the literary works of the *Claridade* group and those of the preceding generation show the preponderant presence of Brazil and her writers' influence in Cape Verdean literature. Baltasar Lopes, Cape Verdean poet comments on this notion in his *Cabo Verde visto por Gilberto Freyre* (Praia, Imprensa Nacional, 1956).
- 7 Manuel Lopes, pp. 64-66.
- 8 Manuel Lopes, *Crioulo e outros poemas* (Lisboa: Author's Edition, 1964), p. 77.
9. *Ibid.* pp. 75-76.
10. Manuel Lopes, *Crioulo e outros poemas*, p. 77.
11. *Ibid.* p.12.
12. Manuel Lopes, *Poemas de quem ficou*, p. 12.
13. Manuel Lopes, *Crioulo e outros poemas*, p. 12.
14. *Ibid.* p. 75.
15. *Ibid.* pp. 22-23.

16. *Ibid.* pp. 31-32.
17. *Ibid.* pp. 83-84.
18. *Ibid.* pp. 31-32.
19. *Ibid.* p. 70.

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21. John Munonye: The Short Story Phase

C.E. Nnolim

To begin with, the major published short stories of John Munonye are listed chronologically below:

1. "Silent Child". *Okike*, No. 4 (December, 1973)
2. "Pack Pack Pack": *Okike*, No. 5 (1974)
3. "The Day I Became A Preacher": *Catholic Life* (October, 1980)
4. "When Season Failed Dom:" *Catholic Life* (January/ March, 1981)
5. "Man of Wealth": *Catholic Life* (July/ August, 1981)
6. "On A Sunday Morning": *Catholic Life* (August/ September, 1982).
7. "A Friend for Christie": *Catholic Life* (June, 1983)
8. "Rogues": *Catholic Life* (February/March, 1985)
9. "The Missing Treasure": *Catholic Life* (April/May, 1985)

Many writers of novels start off their careers with the short story which acts for them as their practice range. Achebe and Aniebo are cases in point on the Nigerian literary scene. John Munonye came to the short story after writing his major novels: *The Only Son*, 1966; *Obi*, 1969; *Oil Man of Obange* 1977; *A Wreath for the Maidens*, 1973; *A Dancer of Fortune*, 1974; and *Bridge to a Wedding*, 1978. Before running out of breath in his novelistic endeavours, Munonye had managed to publish two short stories in the early seventies: "Silent Child"

(*Okike* No. 4, December, 1973), and "Pack Pack Pack" (*Okike*, No. 5 June 1974). "Silent Child" was a story of frustration and vengeance between two children, Oji and Chioma; and "Pack, Pack, Pack" dealt with an episode during the Nigerian Civil War as one old man, Pa Dede, stubbornly stayed behind and survived a bombardment while his wife, Lolo, who led the hurried evacuation of the family to the safety of a neighbouring town had died in exile and failed to return two years after the exodus. After this, Munonye abandoned the short story for a period of six years as he faced the seemingly more challenging task of writing novels, three more of which he produced between 1974 and 1978.

John Munonye thus launched himself into what must now be termed his second literary career - the short story phase - after seemingly exhausting his creative energies in the novels. His first published short story during this second phase appeared in *Catholic Life* (September/October, 1980), entitled: "The Day I Became A Preacher". And a preacher Munonye had become ever since, for in most of his stories his message oversteps his medium and art plays second fiddle to his ideas.

In "The Day I Became a Preacher", the narrator (obviously John Munonye) instructs his atheistic friend, Sam (who believes in "Nothing") that God "made you... to know Him in the next world". This, of course, is lifted unabashed from the "Penny" catechism of the early Catholic missionaries. Nothing seems to have come out from this preachment for Sam was not converted. But Munonye has launched himself on his catechetical career.

As we approach Munonye's short stories the bulk of which came long after he had made his mark in the novel genre, we naturally would expect the perfection of form and the sophisticated mastery of an old war horse who had won his spurs in other fields. Unfortunately, what we read are short pieces that display little craft and less caution - pieces seemingly rushed to a monthly magazine apparently demanding a deadline. The result: one wonders why Munonye has not been able to bring to the art of the short story any artistic lessons he might have learnt from his longer works. Some of his novels, as I have hinted elsewhere, have not worn well, and will not wear well, even if he has displayed solid artistic brilliance in say, *Oil Man of Obange* and *Bridge to a Wedding*. His short stories will wear worse, as the years go by. Artistically speaking, they are far more brittle, far more fragile when Munonye's long years of artistic practice are brought into play. The more one reads Munonye's short pieces the more one is amazed at his lack of artistic consciousness or growth in this literary genre, with the result that works that are altogether inferior are produced after his artistic apprenticeship are supposed to be over, and Munonye seems not to have realized that the urge to write is not synonymous with the urge to create artistically.

But back once more to the short stories proper. Munonye's short stories, taken together, do not make efforts to hide their sarcastic and satiric bent. In the next piece, "When 'Season' Failed Dom" (*Catholic Life*, January-March, 1981), Dom is prevented by a much aware public from cheating at the fuel pumps which he operates during the rush period of Christmas Season, by trying to create artificial scarcity. His efforts to

make extraordinary profits during the sale "Season" by posting a "no fuel" sign and limiting purchase to two Naira per customer backfires when customers see through his gimmick. When he returns at midnight to pump petrol at cut-throat prices, a threatening sign. "Think not, old man, we do not know your tricks. Try selling petrol in secret at night at increased price and see what we will do", forces him to close shop for the entire Christmas season: "And the station remains closed until the second week of the new year". In this story, the author openly jeers at Dom when he is "caught in his own trap" which provides the main thematic focus of this piece.

The ingredients of "Man of Wealth" (*Catholic Life*, July/August, 1981) seems to be tailor-made: a wealthy man who has lost his faith; a prodigal son eager to supplant his father; an ambitious daughter planning to study overseas with her intended- all to be sponsored by her father; two jealous wives playing "catch-as-catch-can" with their wealthy husband by using their children; a deflated tycoon with bank liquidators on his back, trying to sell off his property to pay for his colossal debts - all predictably ending in an "accidental" death-suicide by the protagonist while in hot pursuit in a car chase of his errant and much spoilt son who was escaping with a colluding bank accountant.

Here, the preachy voice is loud and clear. The tragic events move in linear progression toward a predictable but ugly climax. Characterization is deflationary rather than inflationary. Wealth, this story implies, doesn't buy happiness, or even, peace of mind. Chief Simon Edde's two

wives and their children form two armed camps, each wife tearing at him like a vulture through her children, and he knows their game. Simon, his first son from his first wife combines a reckless life-style with lack of consideration for his father. Egged on by his mother, each of the two sons invades Edde's office asking for a new, airconditioned car at the moment that the bank officer, Mr. Lawanson, is threatening to auction off Chief Edde's property as a million Naira defaulter to the bank. To rub it in, Chief Edde who constantly runs to his office to escape the "war" at home, finds to his discomfiture that the office no longer offers a safe haven. There, his accountant has colluded with Godfrey to defraud him of N90,000. Harassment comes from Chief Edde's other social commitments. He is forced to issue a dud cheque (out of sheer shamefacedness) to Mudi Improvement union where he holds the coveted title of Patron.

Before the death in an automobile accident, crushed by a careening truck, he had seen the wretchedness of his life after his own loss of faith (a legionary had called him Simon "Son of Mammon") because he himself had declared: "my own God is money". When he died, finally, a wretched man, "those who knew the facts held that Simon had probably been dead before his car hit the truck". And the futility of it all was summarized by the narrative voice.

Was that the type of thing rich men suffered? Was that the type of life they lived? Money palaver! Hardly any seemed to want to remember now how Simon Edde, while money flowed through his hands had, with vulgar ostentation given to charity, to schools, and even to the

churches during their harvest. They were rather more interested in the fact that in business, Simon had been heartless, had brooked no competition; and had preferred a world in which he was the beneficent father.

These ugly trailers after ostentatious wealth followed Simon to the grave-loss of faith which money brings along with it, polygamy, inconsiderate demands from children and their mothers, fraudulent practices by employees to dupe the illiterate wealthy man of his money, and finally, the heartlessness of banks with whom the erstwhile tycoon was in the best of terms when the going was good.

One observation is that Munonye's preachments are lopsidedly one-sided. For Chief Edde, there is no relief, no one unrelieved moment of joy, none of the pleasant joys and rewards which wealth brings - a trusted lover, a trip abroad, a darling daughter. Munonye is rather too heavy-handed. When, therefore, Munonye preaches, he abandons art, but when he writes out of sheer creative impulse, he takes all the artistic care in the world, as we shall see in the next but delightful story. "On a Sunday Morning" (*Catholic Life*, August/ September, 1982).

"On a Sunday Morning" is a delightful piece devoid of preachments. It is a hilarious lampoon against a worldly-wise perfectionist (but neglectful of matters spiritual) who is distracted no end by the disorder in his house unrelieved by the unhelpful carelessness of his wife (who, for balance, is too involved in things of the spirit to care about the general disorder around her). This piece about a meticulously

fastidious gentleman, alias "Mr. Perfectionist" whose attention to the cleanness of heart ("being in a state of grace" as Catholics might put it) falls far below his attention to order and cleanliness of his environment is pitched for good measure against the general carelessness of his absent-minded wife whose main preoccupation in life is to seek her own spiritual perfection in life hereafter. Our man, always appearing in a "gleaming white shirt" neglects going to church on Sunday, but as soon as his wife rushes out to church for an early morning service, would worry about the absent-mindedness with which she let things lie about, pleading she would "continue to try her best" as her continued lapse in keeping order begin to cause him "petty grief" - with his eyes riveted to the undusted side-stool and the unemptied ash tray.

She, for her part, worries no end about his unkempt soul, his neglectful spiritual untidiness, his general inattention to spiritual perfection, his neglect of the Sunday Mass, reminding him in measured tones that

Those that seek perfection must prepare themselves for the life hereafter since perfection cannot be found here on earth.

Irony and humour etch themselves in this story as the protagonist who would often take out all his clothes neatly arranges in a set of drawers, "not just to air them but also to gaze at them with the deep, almost spiritual joy and contentment which order that, surrogate of perfection gave to his heart," suffers a moment of discomfiture when, "as he

bent down for the tin, something snapped behind him, and with a terribly vulgar force... for sure, the trousers has burst". This is indeed a short story full of balanced cadences, subtle irony and subdued humour.

The next story, "A Friend for Christie" (*Catholic Life*, June, 1983), has little artistic importance. It has neither the delicate balance of "On A Sunday Morning" nor even the moral earnestness of "The Day I Became a Preacher". In this story, Christie, a well-brought up girl from a good family where Jesus rules their daily lives, strikes up friendship with a wayward girl, Lilian, who uses a planned visit to Christie's, to abort the illegitimate baby she was carrying. The ploy succeeds to the shock of Christie's entire household, when detected by Christie's sharp-eyed sister, Dora, who has suspected that Lilian was up to something. If there was a moral purpose or a theme in this piece, its thin outlines could be gleaned from the shock awareness of a pure-hearted Christie, at her own blindness to the wily ways of modern girls.

Munonye returns to preachments in "Rogues" (*Catholic Life*, February/March, 1985). Here, he lambastes Dr. Samuel Neli Akawod, lecturer-turned-politician who earlier came out ashamed from a village launching ceremony where, as lecturer, he could only donate fifty naira, where others were donating thousands. Then, since becoming Chairman of the State Housing Board, he turned out, through graft, to become a tycoon who, in a short time had stashed away eighty-five thousand Naira in cash and in addition bought a brand new 504 GL Saloon car for his wife. But greed traps the sesame

and while one rogue proposes, another disposes. As Dr. Sam was secretly counting and recounting his loot with lickerish relish (brought down from its secret place in the ceiling) armed robbers swooped in, tied him up, and relieved him of all the money. But when he got wiser and took his bribes in fixed assets until he had owned ten houses and five cars, nemesis overtook him once again, as the December 31st, 1983 coup operators jailed him for twenty-one years, and took away from him and his heirs all the ill-gotten wealth. As we can see, anger, indignation, the rush to punish the criminal, submerges art and moral earnestness becomes the thing that supremely matters. Munonye must have felt happy in jailing this crook through poetic justice, although the history of Nigeria since the Babangida coup indicates that Dr. Sam must have regained his freedom and is now enjoying his loot.

The artistic merit of "The Missing Treasure" (*Catholic Life*, April/May, 1985), lies in its satiric but urbane tone in this piece. Munonye satirizes Christians with the imperfect conversion syndrome in our midst who, at the least sign of a thorny problem for which there is no immediate solution, rush to a prayer house to consult a "prophet". The satiric thrust is harsh, pungent, juvenalian rather than Horatian. In rushing to a prayer house to solve his problem (how to locate N500 missing in the house). Jona's eyes were opened to the shenanigans and devilish practices of the prayer-house prophets, who are charging desperately-ill-patients exorbitant prices for terminal illnesses they know there is no cure for. He ends up having faith neither in God nor in the prophets, but something positive did emerge from his horrifying

experiences in the prayer houses: in the midst of his woes, he noted he had no problems to speak of (as he saw suffering humanity with far worse problems than his); for on reaching home, Maureen, his wife presents him with the N500 she had hidden for safe custody (the search for which Jona had gone to the prayer house).

Two notable stories by Munonye which are really “fictionalized” fulminations against the aberrations and evils in our society should not be mistaken for short stories but they are relevant since through them, Munonye in a semi-veiled “faction” lets us into his current thinking about society. I have in mind a series of articles published mostly in *Sunday Statesman* captioned “Horn of Salvation” (*The Nigerian Statesman*, February 26, 1985) and later rebaptized “Land of Prophecy” *Sunday Statesman*, May 19 and 26, and June 16 and 30), including “The Crossing” (August 11, 1985), about which I have commented briefly in the essay: “John Munonye: “The Man and His Work”. I had said: Munonye had turned his attention to short stories, mostly on religious themes. In “Horn of Salvation,” “Land of Prophecy,” and “The Missing Treasure” he concerns himself with the proliferation in Nigeria of religious groups including Anglicans, Catholics, the Salvation Army, Brotherhood of the Holy Cross, true Sabbath Spiritual Church, Mount Zion Spiritual Fraternity, Divine Fellowship Congregation, Holy Evangelist Assembly, Christ Apostle Healing Sabbath Church, and the Supreme Sabbath Church of the Most Holy Spirit. In these stories, Munonye wonders why the same Christian seems as ready to embrace the idol as the cross, why this rush to “ride in a Freudian truck,” why this

“orgiastic bewildering emotionalism.” The escape by Nigerians into religion, Munonye thinks, is an effort “to dwell close to the frontiers of lunacy,” to avoid the rigours of “rational, logical or constructive thinking,” thus allowing “others to come in to do the thinking for us... to think and research and invent and manufacture for us.”

In sum, Munonye’s outing in the short story genre does not advance the artistic lessons he had perfected in his novelistic endeavours, hence, I imagine, his reluctance to have them collected into a volume as Achebe did in *Girls at War* or as Saro-Wiwa did in *A Forest of Flowers*. The reason for the artistic blemishes in Munonye’s short stories may lie in his attempt to use them, not as extensions of his artistic vision but as outlets of commenting on the follies and foibles of the Nigerian society.

22. W.F. Feuser's Works: A Chronological List (1951-1988)

P.O.E. Igwe

(Editor's note: W.F. Feuser also published under the pseudonyms of Frank HAYDER, Ali TATAMBULU and Walter F. WHITE)

1951 Feuser, W.F., "Freiluftkino mit Schneegestöber" (Open Air Cinema in the Blizzard") (Hainsbecker schreibt aus den USA series). *Westdeutsche Zeitung* No. 286, 8 Dec. 1951.

1952 _____ "Im goldenen Staat Kalifornien" (Mit Willfried Feuser durch Amerika) *Westdeutsche Zeitung*, 1952.

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1963 Feuser, W.F. "Der zweite Tag the Iragbebsche, dem Siebenäugigen."
("The Second Day with Iragbeje, the Seven-Eyed"). From D.O. Fagunwa's *Ogboju Ode Ninu Igbo Irunmale*. In: J. Jahn ed. *Das junge Afrika*, Munich, 1963. (Joint translation with T. Folarin).

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1967 _____. "The Robbers" Translated from the short story of Olympe Bhêly-Quénou titled 'Les Brigands: nouvelle' *Black Orpheus*, No.22 (Aug. 1967). Also published in *L'Afrique Actuelle* No.21 (Oct. 1967), 22 – 23.

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A 12-state map of Nigeria. French version by the author on pp. 10-11.

Contents: Secession of the East. – Civilian Participation:- Police action against Ojukwu: A struggle for national survival.

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Forthcoming

“The Image of German and the Germans in French Literature 1945-1970”, a lecture prepared for the Goethe-Institute Lagos, to be published in the maiden issue of *NATOG-Journal* (Nigerian Association of Teachers of German).

“Of Squealers of Dealers, and Serpentine Miscreants: Ola Rotimi’s Press Polemics and Miscellaneous Musings 1969-1988”, a paper read at the Ola Rotimi Symposium held at the University of Port Harcourt on 246-88, to be published in *Ola Rotimi Symposium: Poems and Papers*: “Ambiguous Adventure: French Missionaries in the Bright of Benin” in: *Kiabàrà*, Special Issue on Francophone Afrika and the Caribbean, guest Editor W.F. Feuser (forthcoming).

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“30 years of Modern Language Teaching in Nigeria” Address read by W.F. Feuser at UNN on 9th February 1991 upon receiving the special Honours Award of the Modern Languages Association of Nigeria. To appear in *NATOG-Journal* No. 1.

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